



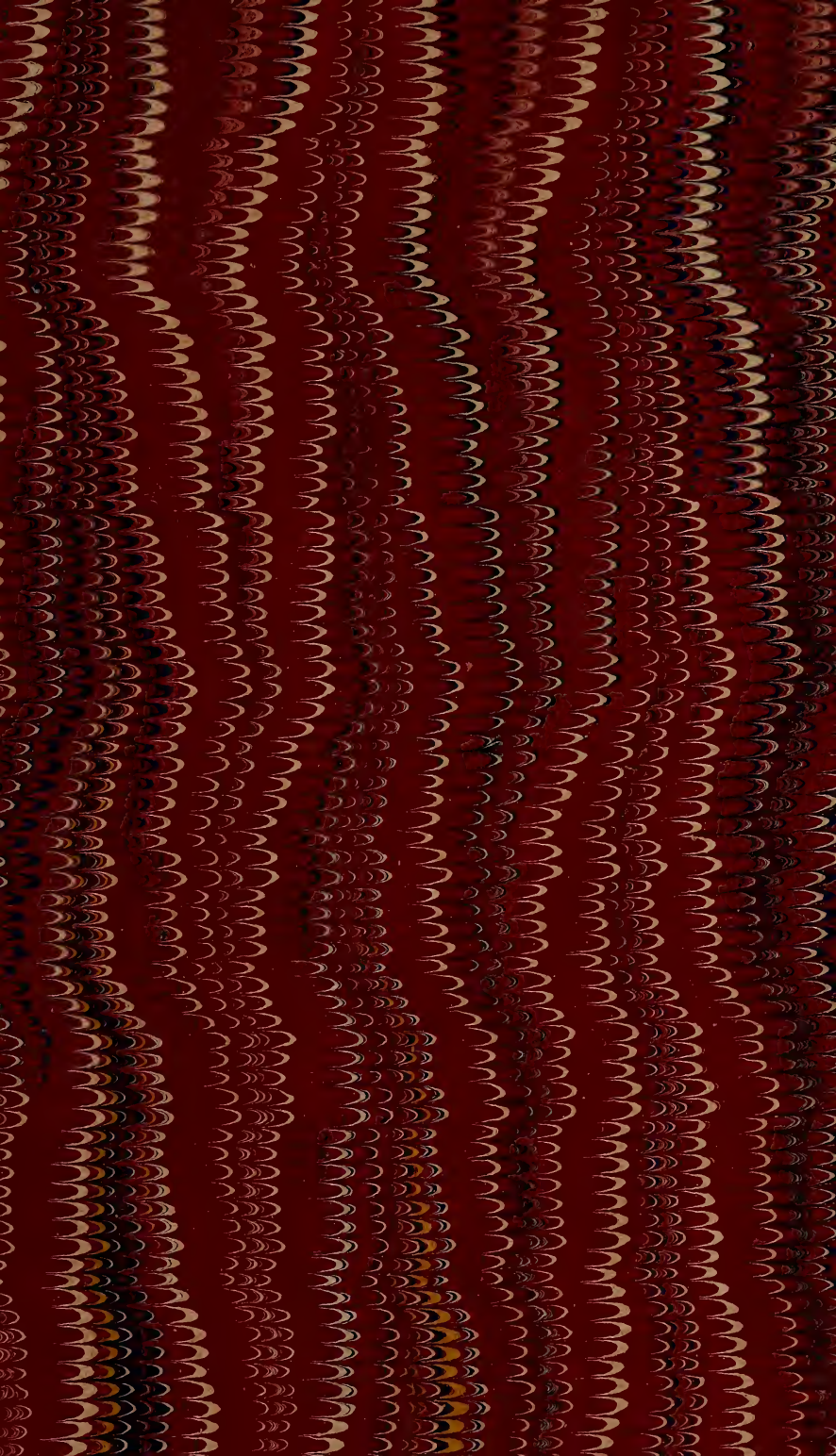
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# Monte Rosa

•  
THE  
• EPIC •  
OF AN ALP



STARR H. NICHOLS





MONTE  
ROSA  
—  
NICHOLS



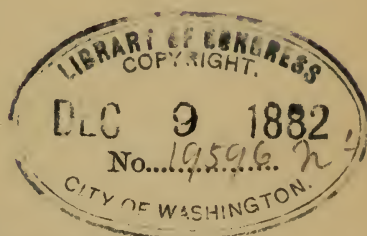
MONTE ROSA

THE EPIC OF AN ALP

BY

STARR H. NICHOLS

33



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Copyright, 1882,  
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Printed by H. O. Houghton & Company.

To  
MY BELOVED WIFE,

FOR WHOSE PLEASURE THIS PUBLICATION WAS BEGUN—

FINISHED, ALAS! TOO LATE.





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# MONTE ROSA.



## I.

### ZERMATT.

By the long ranges of Valaisian Alps  
That crowd the narrowed skies with majesty,  
Where hoarsely cries the new-born river Wisp  
Within its valley-cradle, old Zermatt,  
Low-lying in a streamy gorge, receives  
The guest of Nature to her fastnesses.  
To its seclusion, deep as if wide seas  
Spread silver silence round its solitude,  
Devoutly gather, as to holy shrines,  
Far-traveled pilgrims leaning on their staves,  
And gladdened with the grandeurs of the way.

Like statues of pale marble, Titan-tall,  
And calm in Titan strength, the snowy peaks  
O'ergaze the lowlier vales. Their lifted brows  
Confront the arch of heaven on equal terms ;  
Their grisly flanks record the flight of years  
Whose score is hid in dim eternities ;  
Their hoary heads, wrapped in white silence,  
seem

As lost in deep and sombre reverie  
Upon the painful changes whose rude hands  
Have checked their fiery and unfearing youth,  
And trimmed them to this bleared antiquity.  
Old gray-beards ! Do they still recall, per-  
chance,

The revelries of earlier days of yore,  
When the tough-layered planet rent its folds,  
And burnt its rocky bands like tow in twain,  
Rocked all its coasts with earthquake, roared  
with storm,  
And with volcanic torches ringed its skies,



While all the elements joined gleeful war,  
Their moods being wilder and their forces  
young ?

Time-born, time-worn, and yet outwearing time,  
Are these dumb heralds in their age content  
To stand mere vouchers of those stirring times ?  
And help the younger thoughts of men to glance  
Through chemic mysteries of cosmic change,  
Through strange repulsions and attractions  
strange

At play within the bubble of the globe,  
Till riotous earth, distrained of youthful heats,  
Convulsively drew close her shivering frame,  
And shriveled like a beldame cowered about  
The waning heap of unreplenished fires ?  
What lines of wretchedness then scarred her face !  
What furrows drew the ever-cruel hours !  
How wrinkled like an ocean, high and wide,  
Rose the rough ridges of deforming rock  
In measureless confusion sprawled abroad !

And still the unrelenting years ran on,  
True wandering Jews, whose restless journeying  
Left fossil footprints on each splintered ridge,  
And softly hewed the cliffs, till here were cloven  
The sundered peaks, divided widely separate  
By yawning gorges, whence the sculptured  
                  crests

Stood glorious o'er their valleys like young gods  
Fresh-fallen from high Olympus ; such great  
                  Jove

Might set to sentinel his chosen land.

But who the sculptors whose all-potent hands  
Had chiseled out this giant statuary ?  
What Titan, demon, demigod in rage,  
Brawny artificer, loosed his huge strength  
Upon these ridges, and for wrath drove through  
The iron barriers of these rended crags ?  
How shattered he the rock, and with what  
                  shards

Laid on such crashing blows, and clove the  
stone

To such immensity, and left it torn  
In such a crazy chaos, world gone mad,  
The harsh memorial of his tempest wrath?  
And then what artist, crammed with lawless  
thoughts,

Came in to carve the shapely peaks supreme,  
And fashion out their graceful savagery?

Who? Who indeed? Nor Titan, demon, god,  
Wrought here; no angry Vulcan from his forge,  
No hundred-armed Briareus wroth with Jove,  
No sullen dwarf from fire-fed Jotunheim,  
No thought-distilling brain, nor maddened will,  
Unleashed their forces on these shattered cliffs.  
No! nor no tempered steel rang on their sides,  
No enginery thrust home a rattling tool,  
Nor hand or hammer split their welded sands,  
Nor artist chiseled out the towering crests.

But architect and craftsman both was he  
That all things terrene rules, the immortal sun  
That like high God toils ever weariless,  
Not taking Sabbath, not desiring rest,  
Nor sparing time, but squandering like a prince  
The golden minutes of his myriad years.  
He having moulded earth a little star  
From fiery mist and immemorial time,  
And bent her planetary circle true,  
Called out his servants to complete her orb.  
The cloud he beckoned forth from hollow sea  
And charged with shower ; the winds so lordly  
free

He bid to ride as lackeys at his wheel ;  
The ice was his forbearance, and hale heats  
His unreined strength ; while frenzied light-  
nings struck

With borrowed hammer of his radiance forged ;  
For Lord of lords is he, and his the elements  
To fetch and carry as his utter slaves.

So here he put these untaught serfs to task  
Like strolling journeyman chance-found and  
hired,

Or clumsy laborers working by the day ;  
A paltry mob of idlers, vagabonds,  
Rash and uncouth mechanics, frivolous,  
Guiltless of plan, whose sloven art made light  
Of line and square and compass' puny rule,  
Who laughed at pains and scorned the score  
of hours.

The fickle shower flew headlong at the ridge,  
Pelting all ways ; the plummy snow-flakes brushed  
Their innocent weakness on its stony face ;  
Weak streamlets wandered feebly down the  
rock

In baby furrows, careless of their way ;  
And aimlessly the strong winds whirled about ;  
The crafty frost drove his thin wedges home  
In scar and seam ; the lightning's random sledge  
Smote blows of Thor on every eminence ;

The ponderous glaciers pushed their awkward  
planes

Wherever plane would run ; and daily fell

The dash — the soft, innumerable dash —

Of the sun-waves' foamless surf, in which the  
stone

As gently broke as break the close-sealed buds

Of dauntless violets, when young March

Hunts pallid winter from the greening fields.

These vagrant workmen, with light touch and  
strong,

Drove at the fire-tried rock as if for sport,

Nor cared a whit when grandeurs unforeseen

Began to grow beneath their frolic hands ;

But wantonly they dashed about the crests,

Flew down each gorge, swept every ledge, and  
played

Along the dreadful precipice familiarly, —

Children of cloud and air that took no  
thought,



Yet in good time fulfilled their due, and set  
Their antique nobleness upon the peaks,  
And flung the snows about them for a robe,  
And mailed their cones in ice impregnable,  
And showed their whiteness 'gainst the vaulted  
blue

For one brief hour of geologic time ;  
Dumb witnesses to our disdainful day  
Of what was doing on earth ere man had come  
To see.

And that unlettered time slipped on,  
Saw tropic climes invade the polar rings,  
Then polar cold lay waste the tropic marge ;  
Saw monster beasts emerge in ooze and air,  
And run their race and stow their bones in clay ;  
Saw the bright gold bedew the elder rocks,  
And all the gems grow crystal in their caves ;  
Saw plant wax quick, and stir to moving worm,  
And worm move upward reaching towards the  
brute ;



Saw brute by habit fit himself with brain  
And startle earth with wondrous progeny ;  
Saw all of these and still saw no true man.  
For man was not, or still so rawly was,  
That as a little child his thoughts were weak,  
Weak and forgetful and of nothing worth,  
And Nature stormed along her changeful ways  
Unheeded, undescribed, the while man slept  
Infolded in his germ, or with fierce brutes,  
Himself but brutal, waged a pigmy war,  
Unclad as they, and with them housed in caves,  
Nor knew that sea retired or mountain rose.

So later men but found the peaks in place,  
Nor dreamed of their strange making, how it  
fared,

But saw two ranges ranked in parallel,  
Two rival chains unearthly high, between  
Whose white battalions wound the gorge,  
The streamy, deep-drawn gorge where river  
Wisp

Blows his complaining trumpet loud and shrill.  
There delves a scanty tribe of pious Swiss,  
A care-bewildered folk in petty fields,  
And oft think ill of hills their frequent bane.  
These peaks men found, and lent them freak-  
ish names,

Names since become thrice dear to mountain-  
eers,

Who, having challenged death on their cold  
flanks,

And given him odds for love of the blind play,  
Came back in triumph as from battles won.

Each name a cloudy giant christens, one

Whose Atlantean port in other land

Would gather legend and sweet praise of song;

Names thick with consonants uncouth of sound,

That make scant music in the beat of verse;

Stockhorn, Broad Rympfishhorn, and Strahlhorn  
tall,

And Allah-lin yclept of Saracens

In their brave days when great through Allah's  
name

They harried beaten Christians o'er these  
heights ;

Succeeds the bucklered crown of Alphubel,  
Held sternly 'gainst unweariable storms ;  
Then four slant towers of shaggy Mischabel,  
Highest mid high ; with many lesser spires ;  
Like Nubian slaves in burnous glistening white,  
Their cliffs rise blackly, folded oft in snows  
To shine untrammelled in the upper light,  
Each free and proud as were all heaven his own ;  
Like Nubian slaves their feet below are fast  
Chained to those mighty buttresses of crag,  
That with obtruding bareness crowd the leas.

Confronting these across that rock-bound gorge  
Cut by the mad-waved Wisp long ages through,  
The rival range exalts superior peaks ;  
For on a rugged shoulder of old rock,

Whose unhealed scars betray time's awful strife,  
Vast Weisshorn's slaty pyramid — so vast  
That were all Egypt's build from its large flank  
Out-quarried, 't would no diminution show —  
In stony strength uprears its triple walls  
Above all rivals, and with gleaming load  
Of pendant glaciers decks the front of heaven.  
How long all isolate, mocking each approach,  
It held bleak spaces of thin air alone !  
Till restless Tyndall of its grandeurs fain  
Challenged its cloudy terrors, boldly braved  
The rain of stones that rattle down its cliffs,  
The demon winds that wrestle o'er its wedge,  
The treacherous cornices of snow, storm-curled  
O'er gulfs abysmal that befringe its crags, —  
Braved all, and all out-braving all o'ercame ;  
Then light of foot deflowered the virgin snow,  
That slenderly leaps into kindred cloud  
From the slim tip, its last of mortal earth.  
Next this, the Rothhorn lifts his beamy spear

As burnished steel upon the vassal clouds ;  
And, smooth as ivory with cool sunshine swept,  
Dent Blanche's radiant cone, a trophy-tusk  
Of some huge saurian, out-torn one day  
By some primeval Anak rude in play ;  
Then Schallhorn's slighter grace, with Gäbelhorn,  
And Dent d'Herens, beset with shrouded spurs  
'Neath ever-melting, never-melted snows.

Then swimming on the vision, bold and large  
The monolith of hermit Matterhorn,  
Lean anchorite of mountains, nakedly  
Exposed to all the spite of wrathful heavens,  
A gaunt Stylites on his pillar gray,  
That in scarped precipices rises sheer  
Midst wide unfriendly glaciers desolate ;  
An obelisk rough-hewn, grave Nature's sport,  
Such as some wrathful genius of the Gnomes,  
Some swift impatient Angelo of Elves,  
Plying his furious hammer on the stone,

Might thus have battered lamely out, and left  
Like Medicean tombs, half-finished, twice sub-  
lime.

How glooms the austere bareness of its pile !  
How darkly palled in tragic memories !  
Since Whympers with glad comrades clambering  
down

That baffling steep, so long the frank despair  
Of Alpine cragsmen, high with triumph flushed  
At his new victory o'er the desperate crag,  
Speechless with horror saw his laughing friends  
(Rope-bound as one for happier destiny)  
Slip backward in their tracks, and in a flash  
Shoot wildly down the headlong-bending cliff  
Like boulders crashing towards the Schwarze  
sea ;

Wide spread their fluttering hands across the  
ledge

In frantic clutches vainly wandering,  
Till o'er the neighboring and deathful brink



Of utter precipice they drop like lead  
A thousand quivering fathoms down, the while  
The hoarse air murmurs in their dying ears,  
And so make end, — a grievous end untimely.  
Young, bold, and strong, but in their strength  
    surprised,  
They knew no more of youth or pleasing time.

Yet blame no blame for daring rash to death!  
For while brave men have sons will deeds be  
    done

That show the perilous mettle of bold sires;  
And still the fearless is the nobler race,  
Apter for life, and fitter for rude truth,  
Prolific of such men as seek the pole,  
Or brave the savage in hot Afric's glades,  
Give law at home, or colonize new lands,  
And carry Europe to the farthest Isles.  
Of such a blood the youth will pluck the beard  
Of wolfish death within his dabbled lair,



To get their way, laughing his threats to scorn;  
And some he quickly slays, who else had died  
Obscure in later painful beds at home;  
But men are born enough to spare a waste  
In heroes, whose far-shining names undimmed  
Bound on the withering forehead of the time  
Shall give it lustre to the latest age.

But last we hail the central Alpine group  
That stands far-gazing on the battlements  
Of that portentous wall, that, like a bruised  
And wounded serpent, trails its tortuous length  
From sovran Blanc to sombre Engadine, —  
There stands and claims an old præminence.  
Its peerless giants towering o'er the clouds  
Like armored soldiery in glittering rank,  
Circle the Wispach valley round, and close  
Its bastioned gorge with lines impregnable;  
Then, throwing out a friendly hand snow-gloved,  
To either side bind fast the double chain

Fore-named, in one colossal horseshoe curve  
Bent round through miles of melancholy crag.

Here mass their force the Alpine monarchs,  
Kingly all, and like great kings companionless.  
Breithorn the first, his bold, unshrinking brow  
Thatched thick with snows that whitely over-  
hang

The swarthy face of his scarred precipices ;  
Castor and Pollux next, twin births of Time,  
Old ere their Grecian counterparts were young,  
Pure as the chosen Knights of Holy Grail,  
In harness of the diamond-studded sleet ;  
Then mightier Lyskamm, Coryphæus huge,  
Whose elephantine shoulders lightly bear  
The cloud-gleaned harvest of a century's snows ;  
And last the Monte Rosa, whose tall spires  
The sun first gilds when golden morning dawns,  
And far Orion, through slow-rolling nights,  
Descries as nearest to his seven-fold stars.

## II.

### THE MOUNTAIN.

MONTE ROSA, queen of that large court of  
kings, —

Reigning but ruling not, since each is sole, —  
In all-surpassing splendor keeps high state  
Unceasingly ; about her pillared throat  
She twines a mantle of caressing snow,  
Wind-blown to ripples, like a shallow brook  
That fleets along the pebbles, dimpling on, —  
A cloth-of-silver robe that spotlessly  
Along her ample shoulders drifts, and falls  
In mazy folds and furrows infinite ;  
Now clinging close and showing vaguely clear  
The massive undulations of her form,  
As 'neath its marble dress a statue's limbs ;  
Now wandering freely off in careless wreaths,

Like those that round the wintry fences curl  
In lines of shelter from the driving winds ;  
Then drifting on, her snows become a flood  
Of draperies voluminous, a whirl  
Of banks and hollows, copes of ruffled sleet  
In unrestrained disorder trailing down,  
And tossed in sparkling sheets of frozen foam  
Tempestuously about her feet ; so drape  
Her mountain ruggedness, and kindly veil  
The ravages of nothing-sparing time  
Beneath a starry sheen of woven dew.

From Switzerland the mount escapes the vale  
In gentle slopes, no rare height promising, —  
Like rustic lad that setting out from home  
His coming exaltation not forecasts, —  
But soon puts on a more aspiring strain,  
And swells in swift-succeeding waves its sharp  
    ascent  
Of stony ridges ; like a tumbling surge

When freshening breezes heap it wave on wave,  
Arch springs from arch in boldly growing curve ;  
But presently subdues its hurried rise  
As breathless with the pace, and stays awhile  
Where streams of confluent glacier ease the  
grade ;

But next, abruptly from the glacial plain,  
Like some Cologne cathedral's cliff of gray  
O'er the mean huts of petty villagers,  
Upsprings its central mass, in wrinkled walls  
Of many-weathered crag, oft broken through  
And parted into various precipices  
By the long glaciers grinding hardly down ;  
Here tower the cliffs in Gothic savagery  
To heights announcing all their boundless pride  
And scornful purpose, bearing in strong arms  
A large plateau, where trackless snow-fields wide  
Lie tranquilly outspread, and bright with sun,  
Peaceful as meads Elysian seen in sleep ;  
And long, deep-drifted swales whose restless  
curves

Capricious bend in tempest-moulded lines;  
And treeless glens, smooth-floored with sifted  
                  snows,

Couched tenderly beneath the shaggy brows  
Of darkling crags, dells for trim fairies' meet,  
When 'neath pleased moons Titania calls the  
                  rout,

Sure no intrusive foot will mar the tryst;  
Succeed new cliffs again, whose rigid lines,  
As sternly tense as fierce Ambition's face  
Set to harsh ends, break grimly through the  
                  crust,

And like tall pines that to the sun stretch up  
Their arid tops from dank sun-starved ravines,  
Strain on, as if the pitch already gained,  
The giddy elevation, still were naught,  
And still to rise were easy, since no thought  
Of halt, no weary need of stay intrudes,  
And even gravitation, long out-breath'd  
Seems left for dead below; all sublimed



In one vast lift, and mighty bulk, and heap  
Of rock and earth snow-vested all its change-  
less year.

Then finally two slender tapering spires  
In dainty grace salute the sky, and crave  
His company.

So gradually gains  
The aspiring mount its vantage o'er the Swiss ;  
But bluffs the swart Italians roughly off  
With an abrupt, stupendous precipice,  
As if some planet-carving demiurge,  
With one strong sweep of his resistless sword,  
Had shorn the rock-ribbed framework of the  
globe

Clean through to centre, that the half-world fell  
To lowest abyss ; the other raised its front  
A massive bastion, rampart measureless,  
A tyrant and colossal barrier,  
Fit parting of dissevered hemispheres.  
Harshly it breaks across the gracious vales,



And prisons them darkly in, checks man and  
    beast,  
And halts the light-winged birds in vagrant  
    flight,  
Save the rare eagle on his level vans ;  
A wall so sheer no snow doth cleave to it,  
No cleft-sown cedar mask its nakedness,  
No hardy birch get root-hold in its seams ;  
Barely the many-fingered mosses cling,  
Brown lichens curl, and fearless saxifrage  
Shakes out its milky bells against the crag,  
Where dainty-footed chamois lightly flash,  
A living lightning, 'cross its unmoved face ;  
So deep its plunge, that half a measured league  
Of reeling air not brushes to its base,  
Where spire-tall pines as grasses seem to wave ;  
And from its dizzy brink, the traveler,  
Swooning with fear, plucks back his hasty foot,  
As if a mottled snake had stung it suddenly,  
Or skulking death, in ambush 'neath the brim,

Caught at him sharply, calling loud his name.  
In savage grandeur breaks the huge rock down  
Abrupt, unbuttressed, undivided, black,  
From the cold snow-line to warm haunts of  
men,

Then folds its feet about with velvet meads,  
Where thick grass springs, and vineyards yield  
their grapes,

Brown hamlets nestle, tinkling goat-bells ring,  
And soft-aired, verdurous valleys bend away  
Toward orange groves, and where gray olives bud.

But far aloft the silent silvery peaks,  
Swept round by tangled glaciers as an ocean isle  
By swirling currents, o'er-survey the world  
'Mid lifeless solitudes; nor know life's stir,  
Save the lost chamois whistling for his herd,  
Or when the starling in his noisy hosts  
Makes migratory turmoil o'er the snow,  
Or clanging storks from Scandinavian homes,

In flight for lands of mosque and groves of palm,  
Rustle the silence with their rapid wings.

All else repeats the lonelier age, ere life  
Was born; the thoughtless wind makes harp  
Æolian

Of the serrate crag, the avalanche falls,  
The rock decays, and tumbles roaring down;  
But voiceless are the wastes, where no man  
dwells,

Where bat nor bittern haunts, nor lone wild  
beast,

Whose dells are vacant of the cricket's song,  
The cry of owl, or plaintive whippoorwill,  
The sea-susurrus of the sougning pines,  
And everywhere is deadness undisturbed.

For ages thus, dim with aerial mists,  
Untouched of any soil of common earth,  
Her radiant highness on a rock-hewn chair  
Sits throned in guise imperial: her seat

Of no wrought porphyry's empurpled pride,  
Nor polished marble rough with artist's thoughts.  
But crumpled schists of gneiss, and protogine,  
With mica's shining weakness flaked and seamed ;  
Nature's most coarse originals, untouched  
Of nice refinements, ragged, rent, and stained,  
And scribbled thickly o'er with mystic runes  
That tell how from red fire they came, and how  
Transformed afresh from sea, and how were  
    raised,

Upon the swelling back of vapors strong,  
How fixed in place, and shaped ; legend most  
    strange !

Which they who ran have read, scrawled large  
In that barbaric tongue, wherewith — his  
    mark —

The sloven time signs all his manual works.

Beneath, the ponderous mountain-pillar sinks  
Its shaft, and adamantine strength far down

From glimpses of the ever-prying sun,  
Night-piercing moon, or eye of watchful star,  
Beyond discovered reaches of the mine,  
Beyond the lowest gorge of ocean's floor,  
To Pluto's murky realm and cave unvisited,  
Where prisoned earthquakes shake their hideous bars,

And young volcanoes bubble gruesomely ;  
There rests the mount, its vast foundations  
braced

On that colossal arch whose sweeping span  
O'ervaults the muttering lakes of central fire,  
The flux and fume of windless inner seas  
And molten bays still vexed incessantly.

Italian skies of deep untroubled blue  
Thrice-dyed bind close their sapphire coronet  
To Monte Rosa's alabaster brow.  
The climates, all astray from guardian months,  
Race up and down her sides capriciously,

Like truant children whiling out the time.  
The gypsy clouds a-loitering mid the hills,  
Strolling adventurers from the teeming sea,  
Rehearse their shows before her, and discourse  
Their evanescent pomp to her eternity ;  
Now pitch their roving tents on her large slopes,  
Now trail their arrowy streamers from her tip, —  
Pennons of coasting tempests still mast-down  
The low horizon ; now furl gray storm-caps  
Round her pallid brow ; or lifting, climb the cope  
Of careless heaven to mock her envious heights  
With higher cliffs of fog ; then drooping low  
In long pavilions stretch their lazy folds,  
Soft canopies, above her lily head,  
'Neath which she seems to lie reclined at ease,  
Some stately daughter to a sceptred king,  
Head leaned on hand in summer indolence,  
And large fair limbs outstretched at length,  
half-draped  
And half-displayed, while lights and shadows  
changefully,



Like furtive smiles from sleepy eyelids shed,  
Play o'er her fields of snow ; and reveries faint  
Steal through her thoughtful heart in silentness ;  
Heedless as love of time, and what time brings,  
And pure as Dian walking heaven alone.

Thicken the clouds, she hails the gathering fray,  
And yields her queenliness to hordes of storm ;  
With sweet, cool breath conjures the vaporous  
throng,

Like wily Circe in her subtlety,  
And of their pilfered spoil from every sea  
She robs them cunningly, while they beguiled  
Lie softly on her bosom ; nor resents  
Rude rain, nor hail, nor blasts of bullying winds,  
That howl their bluster in her ice-hung caves,  
Nor blow from lightning's arm, whose brand of  
flame

Smites on her streaming forehead brutally,  
Cleaving her well-forged crags as woodman  
cleaves

A log with his keen axe ; throws trembling back  
The bellowing thunder's harmless noise renewed  
In deep reverberations from her walls ;  
Lets slip the flying avalanche from its high-  
perch

Upon the rocks to stoop a feathery cloud  
Of white-winged mischief on the smothered  
meads ;

Or flings the fragments of her rended cliffs  
With booming uproars to the lowest dell.  
Herself as wild as any tempest born  
Of the conceiving heaven's immingled airs,  
Joins in the loud illimitable tumult  
As one with elemental nature's self,  
Not unscathed, but of the scath unreckful ;  
And while the scowling rabble of low cloud  
Spits out its snow-flakes to confederate winds,  
Plucks in the fleecy waste to every cleft,  
And craftily with shuttles of the blast  
Weaves a new surface to her seamless robe,



Wherein, the storm withdrawn, she meets the  
day,  
Serene as Juno on Olympus throned,  
And sparkling more than night's unnumbered  
stars.

So Monte Rosa stands in empery,  
And so has stood more slowly-pacing years  
Than there are needles on the branching pine,  
Holding a winter in perpetual fee ;  
With naught of change save waste, and weather-  
ing ;  
Cloud, calm, and sun her sole vicissitudes.  
Nor ever could the tardy spring here find  
A fruit-tree grown to hang her blossoms on,  
Nor summer leaves to shade her burning eyes,  
Nor could boy autumn shake a browning nut  
From any copse within her terraces.  
Sparse arctic plants, children of ancient cold,  
About her glaciers' lip hang small and weak,

Left orphans here, belated in the flight  
Their comrades made, upon the ragged skirts  
Of the decaying ice-cape once thick-wrapt  
About the shivering shoulders of the North.  
But on her bossy uplands plays no child,  
Nor human generations dare advance  
Their monuments amid her dateless pinnacles.  
Coldly she keeps her virgin court, nor heeds  
Of all revolving earth's far-ranging course,  
And punctual circuit through sun-governed skies.

### III.

#### THE GLACIER.

THE miser Winter banks unbounded hoards  
Of silvery snows locked fast in wards of frost  
On Monte Rosa's stronghold ; there, with clutch  
Of unrelaxing fingers stiff for cold,  
Holds them well-guarded lest the spendthrift  
    hours  
Of lavish Summer filch the treasured store.  
Deeply he dreads the prowling föhn-wind's  
    breath,  
Deeply, the sun's sly ray unscrupulous,  
And stealthy depredations of gray rains.  
But misers' hoards oft fall to gentle heirs,  
And flow to human uses ; so these snows,  
So keenly guarded, o'er-amassed in time

By often robberies of the traveler-clouds,  
And heaped to surfeit crowd their rocky bounds,  
Then squeezing through the niggard's full-  
crammed fist,  
Steal off unhindered down a choked ravine  
Dug through the mountain's midmost scaurs,  
wherein  
To crystal ice transformed by magic wand  
Of laughing fairies in the sunbeams hid,  
They join the laggard glacier's secular march,  
Which, like calm planets, knows nor haste nor  
rest.

This glacier stream, compact of welded snows,  
A flowing solid of translucent ice,  
Brims to its verge a flinty gorge; there lies  
In silence sunning its unwieldy bulk,  
A strange frost-dragon in steel-gleaming scales  
Coiled close the crags between in many a fold,  
And sinuous curve, and glancing, fretful ring,

Like Norseman's Fafnir, serpent shrewd and  
foul

That gloats above the Niblung's ruddy gold.

A monster vast and vague, whose horrent spines,

The nodding séracs on his bended neck,

Tall-bristling as a feudal city's towers,

Give show of kindling anger ; whose blue  
mouths,

A thousand grim crevasses, spread their jaws

Like ghastly graves in wait for living men.

In his rock-riven lair he lies supine,

Groaning by turns, as gorged with heavy food ;

And seeming motionless secretes his dull intent,

But inches on unnoticed, vale-ward bound,

Tricked thither falsely by the sun's bright lure.

A Protean changeling, much he masquerades,

Eluding quest along his devious way :

First spreads abroad a thrasher's level floor,

Then in long rigid swells gray ocean mocks,

And further winds his train in strenuous curves,  
A winter highway deeply groined by wheels,  
About some cape of crag, or headland bold  
Thrust sharply on its path; then staggering  
down

A short declivity, one ruffled coil  
Disparts its glittering scales, that flinging back  
The sun betrays the reptile on his way;  
But next he crushes through a steep defile,  
Where with convulsive struggles cleaves his  
back

In gulfy chasms, abysses bottomless,  
Ragged and tossed, as had an earthquake turned  
In restless sleep beneath his brittleness:  
Here, toppling icebergs lift their glassy cliffs;  
There, well-squared blocks huge as the slave-cut  
stones

Of building Pharaohs, or tumbled wreck  
Of walls Cyclopean, old Mycenæ's pride;  
One bright confusion, turgid anarchy;



While still as sleeping crocodile by reedy Nile,  
That basking in the sunshine sleepeth long,  
The sluggard keeps his journeying unbetrayed.

But reaching suddenly the frightful brink  
Of a sheer precipice, the glacier halts  
As stiff with horror, all its steely spines  
Erect in regiments of glancing pikes and spears  
And bayonets of broken soldiery,  
Dismayed by rumors of an unseen foe,  
And fixed in wild disorder as they stand.

But when the moonlight sheds elusive gleam  
Upon these frigid fantasies, the wan-faced  
                  throngs  
Stand ghastly horrible, a maniac rout  
Of graveyard ghosts by one mad impulse seized,  
An eerie throng of goblins, phantoms, weirds,  
All leaning guilty forward bent for home,  
But caught untimely in their panic-flight



By toll of matin bells, and cock's shrill crow  
In the cool break of dawn, and petrified  
Upon their ghostly track ; silent as tombs,  
Save when some glimmering tower, driven se-  
cretly

Beyond his poise, goes crashing down the steep,  
A world of icy ruin as it flies,  
And clangs the plausible echoes with its din.

But still thrust on by ever-crowding snows,  
Held in cold durance on the mountain's top,  
The unwilling Python leaps the bitter verge,  
And falls a weltering ruin in the abyss ;  
There shattered into fragments trails along,  
A cataract of riven torsos, limbs,  
And mangled men in marble, as had here  
Great Athens dashed her sculptured failures  
down

From this unfaned Acropolis ; or say,  
A lava-flow of lucent mother-o'-pearl

In lava-torture writhing as it runs ;  
A soundless cascade, death-struck Niagara,  
Or else Niagara's rapid ere the fall,  
Seized in grand rush of all its racing floods,  
Its waterspouts, its flinging jets of foam,  
Struck in mid-volley by the trancing breath  
Of zero cold ; that fierce flow frozen, all swirls  
Congealed, each furrowed rill, each glassy drop,  
And every rainbow bubble caught surprised  
At top of speed, and crystaled as it flew ;  
While here and there a leaning Pisa-tower,  
Mid-rapid left, stands strangely eminent  
Amid its shattered compeers, rooted fast  
Within its treacherous base.

Thus wounded, torn  
At surface ; but deep down the wily worm  
Has kept his swollen body whole and sound ;  
All fresh and unconcerned and fearlessly  
He holds his headstrong course to that low vale  
For which he started half an age ago.

The ice-fall past, the glacier gathers in  
His shivered members, smooths his furrowed face,  
And spreads again in fair expanse of field,  
A fruitless glebe no plowshare ever rends,  
No sower sows with seed, though lying plane,  
And well-bestead with limpid boiling springs,  
With here and there a lakelet blue, and large  
As a circus ring, whose depths untenanted  
See never minnow herding in its pools,  
Nor swift-finned pike dart on the silly dace,  
Nor painted trout surprise the gilded fly,  
But peacefully the prisoned waters smile  
Within their sea-green bowls of carven ice,  
Fit goblets for great Thor and Odin great  
When wandering from dim Asgard in the North  
They raised the hunt amid archaic hills;  
Pellucid meres, whose baby wavelets low  
Break softly on the sharp, unpebbled marge,  
Where greens no sedge, nor music-making rush,  
No cress, nor water-loving flag, nor mint,  
Nor odorous lily brave in white and gold.

By night the ice-sheet lies as dead with cold,  
But sunrise brings the pulse of life to it;  
For rustling through its pores like wind in corn,  
Millions of new-born rills begin to drip  
With myriad morning-murmur musical,  
And stir its pulses with first throbs of life.  
The drops to rills, the rills to rivulets fill,  
And these to brooks, that wax to dashing  
streams ;

The streams uniting into torrents swell,  
That smoke along their course with rocket-speed,  
Grooving deep sluice-ways in the dripping ice  
Veined like an agate, and of such bright gleam  
As shines from polished marble touched with sun  
Upon its watery brilliance, seen thus fair  
At new St. Paul's outside the Roman walls.  
Here, confined all alive, the bubbling floods,  
Swifter than storm-blown birds that fleetly skim  
To leeward down a gale, slip down their runs,  
Clashing their cymbals in melodious haste,

And pause no instant in the breathless course,  
Until they reach the Moulin's gloomy pit, —  
A witch's well of blackest mystery  
Bored through the glacier's breast to soundless  
    depths,  
And weirdly hung with looped and torn ice-  
    fringe,  
And ragged icicles about its lip ;  
Here gleefully bounds in the ramping flood  
'Mid shrilling echoes from the straitened walls,  
Breathing its watery smoke to heaven, then hides  
In hollow caves by cold enchantments bound,  
Nor sparkles into sunshine thence for many  
    days.

Far down the gorge the glacier welters on,  
Out-breathing death wherever points its tongue,  
While on it grows nor tree nor smallest shrub,  
Nor bird gives voice, nor ever any beast  
Goes down to graze there, nor doth insect glean



His morsel-meal from its dull barrenness ;  
But in its bosom lies the chamois dead,  
Entrapped, fond brute ! in some unblest cre-  
vase,

With travelers pale, and o'er-adventurous guides  
Snatched from the crest of life's most happy  
hour

To this long sleep and hated sepulchre.  
And on its bosom tombs the errant bee,  
And silly butterfly encrystaled there,  
By sunshine traitored in a flowery quest,  
Where never flower blossomed, nor shall bloom ;  
And on its sluggish back it hales away  
Great loads of mountain spoil in smutty lines  
Of black moraine, the shapeless wreck and  
shred

Of grand old crags, and beauteous peaks, whose  
strength

It slowly ruins, — slave that slays its king.  
A belt of Arctic cold, it crowds between

The fields where gracious summer glows,  
Pushing its devastations to the end ;  
Then, foully burrowing 'neath stone and earth,  
Is slain in secret by the assassin Sun,  
Whose treacherous lure hath brought it down  
so low ;

Yielding its life-blood in a moaning stream,  
The tawny Wisp whose torrent floods make  
haste

To drown their clamor in the leaping Rhone.  
But, daily slain, the glacier daily fills  
The rock-sown glen with echoing currents loud,  
That fuller flow the more the dog-star burns,  
Gladdening the meadows of remotest men  
With benefactions sprung they know not whence,  
And haply care not in their indolence.

So every snow-flake wrung from Winter's hand,  
And miser-grasp, finds its old home, — the sea,  
And frolics on the surge, whence in a cloud  
By false Ixion, that seducer Sun,  
'T was ravished willingly so long ago.



Oh ! happy we, whose brief and page of life  
On kindlier reaches of remembered time  
Is written, when but degenerate broods  
Of pristine monster-glaciers gall the hills ;  
Nor know, as our unknown forefathers knew,  
His deadly greatness, when one ice-sheet  
          wrapped

His vast of body round each isolate peak,  
And trailed a mighty octopus his hundred arms  
And loathy tentacles of horrid death  
Across the fertile acreage, then gorged  
The valleys with his slimy hulk, and crawled  
Supinely o'er the hill-sides for his prey ;  
Winning the reindeer from cold Norway down,  
And woolly mammoth with their vanished mates,  
That craved perpetual winter for its cold.  
How groaned the land beneath his frigid bulk !  
How fled skin-clad barbarians affright !  
Their pastures buried, wattled huts o'erturned,  
And hunting grounds laid waste, nor dared  
          return

For drear immeasurable millenniums,  
Till wounded grievously the glacier lay, —  
Fafnir by solar Siegfried deeply cloven, —  
A dragon shriveled, spent, and shrunken back  
To his high mountain fastnesses, half-dead,  
Mere fossil of his prime, and mummied corse  
Of that prodigious spoiler whose foul length  
O'erlay this realm with universal blight,  
And hideous leagues of body unassoiled.  
But now in his abandoned ranges wide  
Men plant their vines, and drink the blood of  
grapes,  
Build sunny homes, and reap their grains in  
peace,  
So long as he returns to scathe no more.

#### IV.

##### ST. THEODULE.

BENEATH dark Breithorn's beetling brow, 'twixt  
that

And rearing Matterhorn, St. Theodule  
Bends graciously its snow-white neck, as when  
The laggard ox stoops low his tranquil head  
To take the yoke; so forms a crescent pass  
In that forbidding wall, which otherwise  
Imprisons Zermatt the streamy in its guard.  
Thence on clear days, when noon pours its steep  
light

On the white wonder of the Rosa's snows,  
The mount displays its glories unsurpassed.  
Set like a castle mastered of great drifts,  
And buried half beneath them, — while its lords

Are gone, and gone its ladies all, it stands  
Corner to a supernal masonry,  
Whose uncoursed crag within its hollow ring  
Begirds the Gorner glacial circus round,  
Building a matchless amphitheatre —  
So large 't would dwarf Rome's Colosseum  
To a feaster's bowl, — with glacier paved,  
And terraced to the clouds with bank on bank  
Of trailing glaciers, crystal, undefiled.  
Here seems as if the word were given  
To deck a fitting court for that assize  
Delayed so long, when risen men should stand  
In their simplicity before the throne,  
The great white Throne which scarce shall shine  
    more bright  
Than these broad snows beneath this midday sun.

Here Breithorn, the surpliced Twins, and Lys-  
    kamm  
With Monte Rosa ranged, — unbroken choir

Of voiceless singers, choral to the eye,  
One giant picture form, at one glance swept  
From crown to base, from base to dazzling  
crown,

A silver splendor, seat of innocence.  
Each dark-faced precipice, each slender spire,  
And every craggy cape and shadowy bay,  
Are boldly marked amid wide, crusted snows,  
Whose lustre blinds a quadrant of the sky ;  
Their tireless roods of heaven-encroaching line  
Aspiring to the zenith threat the stoop,  
And quivering curve of azure firmament,  
That bends a lover's pace beyond their tips ;  
Their glory, vastness, strength in deep repose,  
Tower in such near horizon, so sublime  
That Nature stands astonished, blinded, dazed,  
Amid imperial glories still her own.

Here one refulgent morning, after days  
Of storm, when hosts of thoughtless clouds had  
flung

Discarded snows on every bossy hill,  
Chanced a good bishop from a western see,  
A man athletic for his years and work,  
Who held great Nature dear, and not too much  
Accursed by her Creator's word of haste,  
When Adam "took and ate." Here, toiling on  
O'er the high level of St. Theodule,  
Whose unvexed slope as polished ivory shone,  
The dazzling spectacle immense and pure,  
Its all-unrivalled, immemorial grace  
Stirred his grave soul to ecstasy divine,  
That so he stood quite still, and called his guides,  
Those hardened veterans in such sceneries,  
To check their swinging steps, and bare their  
heads

With him in holy reverence, while each,  
As each had learned at mother's knee, re-said  
In his own native speech the Lord's great prayer,  
Our Father, which in Heaven art (as chanced  
A psalm in triple tongue), to testify



Transcendent gratitude to God most high,  
For such amazing glory at its full.

So stood he with the astounded hill-men there,  
Like some primeval Druid in his woods,  
Head bared, and lifted hands outspread toward  
heaven,

His white hair floating on the idle breeze,  
Adoring ancient Nature — goddess dear,  
And mother of all worships 'neath the sun —  
With deep, ancestral reverence, ere he knew  
Her gracious cult behind its thin disguise:  
Stirring the wintry waste with such a voice  
Of transport as his high cathedral roof  
Had seldom echoed from its fretted vault.



V.

MILAN.

A STRANGER once at Milan loitering  
Throughout a leaden day, fatigued at last  
With the rich city's treasures, — jewels, shrines,  
Ivories, and pictures, and the Iron Crown, —  
I turned my steps to the Duomo's fane,  
The hour before the dimmed Apollo drove  
His drowsy team below the western wave.  
Thence through the incense fumes, and past the  
    priest  
Droning his dolorous chant, I mounted  
Up to the pinnacled and saint-thronged roof,  
And saw the vesper city dim beneath,  
And nothing more, and felt the world was small  
    and mean.

But suddenly the clinging vapors, touched  
By chill of gaining night, swept back their folds,  
And opened all-glorious Nature to her depths.  
Like all the immortal gods, the white-cliffed Alps,  
A full Olympus of divinities,  
Towered high in sunny grandeur on the north,  
And Monte Rosa, like great Hera, first.  
Upon her swart and dreadful precipices  
A deeply-moving beauty delicately shed,  
And in her dusky vales a tender glow  
Of purpling atmospheres, that royally  
Bathed crag and buttress and each shaggy spur,  
And softened all rough outlines into grace ;  
But on her fulgent spires such light ineffable  
As makes men sigh to share her heavenly  
                  heights,  
Their fadeless pleasure, and unchanging calm.  
A lotus land of pensive afternoons,  
A garden of Hesperides, whose close  
The gold-haired daughters of the kingly sun

Kept carefully, where fear, nor night, nor death  
Could come, nor winter fall for all its snows;  
But where the palm might lift its plummy fronds,  
The peacock burn, the slim gazelles find rest,  
And all rare things the gloaming hollows hold.

Then sank the sun, and saffron grew to pink  
Upon the flushing snows, till spire and dome  
And every silver valley filled with fire;  
And like a heavenly rose upon the sky  
The well-named Rosa blossomed full and large,  
And flung her blushes to the eastern clouds,  
And far across gray earth, and crowned the  
          heavens

With more than many roses' loveliness.

Then gathering fire the rock itself did burn,  
A flameless pillar, red Arabian gold,  
Or ruddy coral from Pacific seas,  
Built to a dreamer's palace looming warm

In dreamer's whirl of lawless fantasy  
Against the darkening twilight, such no poet  
sang,  
Or e'er shall truly sing as it deserves.

Then fading slow, as fled the truant sun,  
Failed to such flowery hues, and ravishing,  
As o'er shy spring's ambrosial orchards roll  
In fold on fold of odorous April bloom,  
Where white and pink contend for mastery,  
And now the pink is all, and now the white,  
But lovely, dainty, pure, and delicate  
Beyond compare; as if the dewy eve  
Had touched the rude rock's flinty heart, and set  
Unwonted juices leaping in its veins  
And hardened pulses, till it smiled in flowers.

But paler grew against the growing dusk,  
Till carven cloud it feigned, yet more than cloud,  
Of subtler line than cloud could ever draw;

Rather say, a rigid wave of chiseled foam,  
A swollen tempest-surge, with dimples dark,  
Liquid jets, and melting bulbs translucent  
Turned to stone, and fixed in air so loftily,  
It seemed the roof and parting of the world.  
With sight of its unfailing strength, men's  
    hearts

Wax strong, and in its restfulness find peace.  
And so it stood until the jealous Sun  
Drove off in anger, taking all his beams,  
And left the world to darkness unrelieved.

But everywhere a subtle sorcery  
Prevails ; the mountain charm subdues all  
    change

Of changeful nature to itself unchanged.  
Splendor of sun, or pallor of chill moon,  
Dawn's tranquil gold, eve's afterglow of fire,  
Stillness like sleep, or roar of hindered storm,  
But magnify, not mar, her majesty ;

While all the wearing years that waste the world,  
And human hearts as well, but little win  
From that high grace wherein it pleases God  
To keep his mountain standing for a time.



## BOOK SECOND.

### I.

#### THE ASCENT.

BUT not at Monte Rosa's foot appalled  
Need men sit cowed, while envious of her heights.  
A clever cragsman, sound of limb and bold,  
May stoutly dare the snow, the ice, the crag,  
And push his clamber till he stand supreme  
On the sharp tip, a blunted needle's point,  
And zone the world with solitary gaze.

While earth yet sleeps within that shadow cool  
Of her own body, which men call The Night,  
Strides forth the alert and girded mountaineer,  
With clattering heels that worry all the house,  
Across the friendly threshold of the auberge

Crowning the Riffel's brim high o'er Zermatt.  
With him go brave companions and bold guides,  
And toilsome porters carrying food and gear,  
Stalwart, stout-hearted Swiss, of that unflinch-  
ing race

So true to duty though the worst impend,  
Who mostly die, slain by these ruffian crags,  
Yet none the more desert them, but defy.  
Keen Alpine axe in hand, and shoulder ringed  
With coil of trusty rope, whereon may hang  
All lives, ere day is done, the men fare forth  
Across the scanty sward, whose downward stoop  
Misgives the coming toil with short-lived ease;  
See the large constellations burning bright,  
The Milky Way's high bridge and trembling  
mile,

Between the antlered foreheads of the hills,  
That bar the dusk horizon solemnly  
Against the lonely magic of the night.  
How ghostly looms the all-dispeopled world!

How haunted its wide silence steeped in dark!  
Sombre and dull, oppressed with lingering sleep,  
They stumble mid the pathless shingle, where  
The glow-worm lantern throws a sickly ray  
That darkens darkness with its wavering flame.  
Then soon they skirt columnar Riffelhorn,  
Whose guilty rock, like many a taller Alp,  
Has slain its man without remorseful sign;  
Then leap upon the Gorner glacier's floor,  
Whose stationed flood, a solid Amazon,  
Lies naked to the stars in pulseless sleep,  
And plod along in angry wonderment  
That men should waste their drowsy, restful  
morns

In such emprise to climb a foolish hill.  
But ere their lagging feet have paced its breadth,  
Behold! the Bedouin Night strikes his brown  
tent,

And swift of foot slinks subtly down the west  
Before a cool, thin light, that drives its has-  
tening wave

Beneath the stars, and quells their eager eyes.  
The sickle-moon flings forth one keener flash  
(As Dian angered at her near eclipse),  
Then fades to withered cloud, and less than  
cloud.

Meanwhile the cheery Day begins to light  
Within the smoky caves of eastern mists  
His earlier fires; feebly they glimmer first,  
A low white dawn with faintest breeze astir,—  
Then faintly reddening steal from fog to  
fog

Uncertainly, as when betimes aroused  
A camping hunter lights a brush-heap stored  
In some rock-chimney, feebly curls the flame,  
Half lost in smoke along the cold, green wood,  
And scarce gives sign if it will win or no.  
But striking up the hill and cope of heaven,  
Auroral streamers dash the gauzy scud,  
That floats so high it seems beyond the air,  
With spray of saffron pale, that ripples wide

Till all the dusky east is swept with wave  
Of daffodil transpierced with twinkling stars.  
Then heaps exultant Morn his gaining fires,  
And flings their glowing embers far abroad  
Upon the folded cloud-rack palled in gloom  
Upon the dense horizon, kindling it  
Like summer thatch with swift access of flame,  
And penciling its fretful caverns with hues  
That shame the gold and scarlet-painted woods,  
When autumn frost to rainbow fires their  
green ;

Then higher still piles Day his furnaces,  
Till with fierce lustres running swift as thought  
Through maddened crowds, he flies along the  
mists,

And burns in tranquil conflagration pure,  
Intense, and vaster than wide prairies show,  
When red men light the grass ; but noise-  
lessly,

As step of spring o'er beds of sweet arbutus,

Flames and glows through all the curtained  
vapors

Hung arow 'bove unresponsive snow-fields  
Ghastly pale, till heaven is paved like gold  
With level leagues of incandescent cloud,  
That blazing fiercely still blaze unconsumed.  
Then last the Orient Sun, Day's joyful lord,  
His silver lances held on high before,  
Extends his sceptre to the stooping hills,  
Now bending lowly toward his changeless seat,  
As vassal earth on fervid axis whirls ;  
And loosing all his meteors into air,  
Than star-showers brighter when the night is  
full,  
Than snow-flakes thicker when the squall is  
fierce,

Fulfills the immeasurable gulfs of space  
With glancing lights and flakes of living fire,  
As were no end to his still wasting store,  
And brings the dear familiar daylight back,  
And all things dear to happy men with it.



Now speed the sunny meteors, flock on flock,  
Swifter than winter-shunning birds, and fly  
In arrowy lines to Monte Rosa's tip  
Of flushing stone, lighting in myriads.  
Legions more on soundless unreturning wing,  
Bear down to the grim brotherhood of peaks  
All sombre still with night's cold loneliness,  
And cheer their drearihead with day's new smile.  
Still following myriads, without a pause,  
Drop flitting, gay invaders down each cliff,  
Whose wrinkled eld they mask in veils of rose ;  
Brush the wan snow plains with an alien gold ;  
Sweep quickly off the webs of silver rime,  
By frolic night-folk spun in highland dells  
For their light sports ; unseal frost-fettered rills,  
And pierce the heavy eyes of herdsman lone,  
And maids undaunted on the upland meads,  
Where breezy summer long they tend their kine,  
For humble wealth, though lean return of curds ;  
Cloud-girt as Jove on Ida, dim to men

As sailors ice-embargoed near the pole,  
And deaf to thund'rous tides of that great world  
Ringed broadly round their feet, whose loud  
events

Break noiselessly 'neath those unheeding heights.

But still unspent, the ever-squandering sun  
Scatters new lights that loiter not, but swarm  
In sparkling legions on the denser clouds,  
Still massed unstirred between the lower cliffs,  
In counterfeit of such an ice-jammed stream  
As chokes Norwegian fiords; when strangely rent  
The solid-seaming floe dissolves its bonds,  
And rolls its mocking icebergs lightly off  
In buoyant fleets of wind-tossed fugitives  
(The full-sailed argosies of airy bays),  
Up each warm slope and into cooler skies.

But though morn calls, no living thing bestirs  
Amid the graceless crags, no sweet lark sings,

No chippering swallow skims the frosty air,  
No marmot whimpers, bleats no tender kid,  
Nor hums a beetle from his hammock flower ;  
But silently the tawny sunshine gives,  
And silently the grisly rocks receive,  
The wondrous transformation of the dawn.

And still the saffron meteors thicklier swarm  
Than sparks from blacksmith's anvil when he  
          smites

The glowing bar, and swarming burst above  
The snowy gates, and pour their multitudes  
Adown the shadowy valleys, till they rouse  
The darkest gorges with the glance of morn.  
Then all the dewy lowlands smoke and steam,  
Swift cascades glitter, cattle rise and feed,  
And sober-visaged Switzers, young and old,  
Drift out from chalets quaintly carved with  
          flowers

And pious legends, brown, deep-eaved, and low,

And firmly anchored 'neath stone-laden roofs,  
To early toils of far-resplendent day.

Meanwhile our cragsmen, now beyond the wave  
Of the great Gorner glacier, break the fast  
Of fasting guides on "auf der Platte's" rock,  
Which lies ice-girdled where begins the steep.  
Thence small as flies, and slow as horned snails,  
Cheered by the sun, their father in the flesh,  
They pant along the snow-crust, full of life,  
'Mid the pale death of Arctic sceneries,  
And landscapes bare as scientific faiths ;  
Such know the dreary souls in Labrador,  
And polar bears round Greenland's glaciated  
coast :

For Nature greets men here with savageries,  
Offers no flowers, nor fruit, nor song of wak-  
ing birds,  
No mossy grove, nor hardship-scorning pine,  
Nor place for rest, nor safety by the way ;

And though attired in white of virgin nun,  
With face of saintly beauty, yet malign  
Her heart, and, her kind motherhood renounced,  
She seems step-mother strange, austere, and  
cold,

But for man's ruin ready every hour,  
And to his anxious life indifferent  
As belted Saturn in his blameless sphere.

Now up steep bossy sides of crusted snow,  
Night-chilled to hardness, fit to bear their  
weight,

Their creaking steps ascend without a pause, —  
A trifling climb, were this the way of all.  
Rope-bound in line, lest some snow-screened  
crevasse

Trip some unguarded foot, they wind along  
Like doubling Reynard when the hounds give  
chase :

Now lightly leap a maze of glacier chasms,

Now, faces downward, crawl o'er wider gulfs  
On thin snow bridges, frail as life in age,  
Frozen o'er the blue and bottomless crevasse,  
Where even the summer lying lies a-cold,  
And that sharp trapper Death keeps set his  
                  springs

To catch the rash transgressor unaware.  
Now tangled in a net-work of wide pits  
They wander dubiously, no outlet found ;  
Or issuing thence dismayed behold their course  
Decoying where the unharnessed avalanche  
Runs down its trampling herds of startled snows,  
And breathless flit across it one by one,  
Afraid to speak, lest any sound stampede  
Its deadly multitudes ; then lies their path  
Where *séracs* huge, and nodding to their fall,  
Lean toppling o'er an ice-slide's polished face,  
To hurtle down anon in fragments fierce  
With lonely clangor ; or, on crossing this  
Like timid hares athwart the scent of hounds,



And taking to the cliff, they escalate  
Its gnarled and guttered roughness, on its wall  
Bruising their tender flesh, on its immensity  
Embarked like nautilus with his frail sail  
On the large surge of ocean's liquid round ;  
Now creep they quivering up a narrow shelf,  
Where squirrel scarce could run his pretty track ;  
Now cling by thinnest crevices where fingers,  
    toes,  
Pinched bloodless in the crannies, barely hold ;  
Then crowd up some close chimney in the cliff  
(No sooty sweep to narrower flues compelled),  
Where ice-paved walls, smooth and precipitous,  
Defy an essaying, save for notches cleft  
By lusty axe-cuts of untiring guides ;  
Glued to the palisade, with desperate clutch  
Of taloned rock-swallows hanging by their nests,  
They crush and squeeze along, or up or down  
Or anywhere, as chance allows, unsure  
Even so of outcome fortunate to toil.

Sometimes in deadliest peril they evade  
As by a miracle a rattling hail,  
And furious cannonade of bowlders huge,  
Shrill-humming stones, and tons of whizzing ice,  
Dread salvos of a foe's artillery,  
Discharged by skulking frost-imps overhead,  
Who, keeping sleepless sentry all the year,  
With these malignant volleys fend the ledge.

And so our travelers moil, and trudge along,  
Panting for breath, with trembling knees, athirst  
And faint, hands bleeding from the sharp-edged  
rocks,

And tired hearts knocking 'gainst their seated  
ribs ;

Till, one cliff conquered, on its saw-like ridge  
They sit secure, and gazing proudly down, —  
Like daring boys astride a roof-tree keen,  
And perilous to hold, or leave ; not long,  
For soon they find the sturdy ice-clad spikes  
Make cause of quarrel to their younger flesh ;

Though fondly clasped with more than lover's  
warmth,

They give them welcome cold as foeman's steel.

But thus at last they overtake and win  
The "Saddle's" windy seat conspicuous,  
And camp them down for breathing-space and  
food,

Indifferent lunch o'ertouched with wild surmise ;  
For glancing 'cross the abysmal glacier-bed  
Stretched far beneath them at a dizzy depth,  
They mark great Lyskamm's shelving precipice,  
That fronts them opposite, in black dismay,  
A thrilling type of dangers all their own ;  
But vaunting still a prowess none the less  
Than doughtier cragsmen boast, who still have  
dared,

And conquered Lyskamm in his awfulness,  
They draw not back, but brace their souls anew,  
As men whom threats refresh, and re-resolve  
To hale their quarry home, whate'er betide.

Useless the feat and dire the useless toil,  
With trivial recompense for time waylaid !  
And why should men but delicately bred,  
With soft white hands woo labors so austere,  
And peril thus their world for one grand hour  
Of martial conflict with intrepid Death ?  
Why ? But that we are children of rude sires,  
And with ancestral humors o'er-infused ;  
In us old ardors burn, wild instincts thrill,  
Of our own will and motive innocent,  
Which dim forefathers from their graves be-  
queath.

As they were hunters, herdsmen, warriors bold,  
We living in their flesh crave open fields,  
Bleak hills and streams, dark woods and aim-  
less toils.

Their habits strong, the customs of wild years,  
Lurk deeply lodged in our less brutish strain,  
And wake to hunt us now afield, and now  
To sail far seas, or raise all-risking wars,

And even to invent new dangers in our zest,  
That so our dainty nerves may leap and thrill  
With those fierce shivers of delight wherein  
Our unhoused sires did spend their stormy lives.  
Here in the wilderness we find old homes,  
Ancestral acres lapsed but for a time,  
Abandoned playmates now rejoined to claim  
Our forfeit part in them inherited  
From childhoods lost in dusky centuries  
Of mouldered sires re-born again in us.  
The mount, the moor, night, snow, and steep-  
    built crag,  
With all that puts sweet life at threat'ning odds,  
Though yesterday acquaintances of ours,  
Come to us thus as oldest proven friends  
And dear antagonists invincible,  
From our unbreeched progenitors, who knew  
And brothered them all so long ago;  
And dying left their turbulent comradeship,  
A true love-gift, a blood inheritance,

A legacy within our members hid  
Of rippling nerve that leaps when dangers press,  
A bandit craving for a bout with death,  
Ourselves the priceless stake, — 'gainst nothing !  
And here on this bare crag we drink hilarity  
In deep ancestral cups, and wassail keep  
With fresh, bright air, that like a rustic wine  
Intoxicates ; with sunshine, boisterous wind,  
Large sky, free space, and blood that riotously  
Invades the swollen veins ; the sense supreme  
Of needless dangers met, defied, disdained,  
And life exalted to an epic feat.  
How tame, how poor unspeakably, the lot  
Of travelers wheel-bound to dusty roads,  
And dismal safety ! their only care to dine  
Deliciously ; their stern ambition then  
Another day to drive, and dine as well.

But sport and jest here bubble gayly forth,  
And laughter as of boys on holiday,



Makes life elate and young ; while each one still  
Ignores the unfinished furlongs' dreadful steep,  
And drunk with pleasure dreams no dream of  
fear.

Then leap they to their feet again, refreshed,  
And like Odysseus on *Ægean* seas,  
Unsated with old pains and perils now foregone,  
Stand gladly forth to seek adventures new.

Now falls a wildering mist, some rambling cloud,  
And now a driving shower, thick mountain dew,  
And then a dusty snow-flaw chokes the air  
With pale frost-orchids, fluttering thickly down,  
Breeding sharp winter in those summer skies ;  
While Boreas blows his strident Alpine horn  
About their ears with thought-confusing din,  
And sings his ancient jocund jödel to the crag.  
Then swift returns the sun in withering strength,  
Turning December back to hot July,  
And melting tired limbs with swooning heats.

All weathers flit about the indifferent cliff,  
Like martins round their summer-haunted eaves,  
And flutter forth in weaving interchange,  
Now cheerful, now severe, or wet, or dry,  
Or hot, or cold, or gusty, or serene.  
Mayhap a little cloud, mere cap-full of light fog,  
Is gendered where they climb, and thunders  
born

Of the quick-curdling mist growl furiously  
With voices leonine about their steps,  
While snaky lightnings hissing round their heads  
From cloud to rock, dart forth their forkéd  
threats,

As were the mountain spirits roused to guard  
Their shrines invaded by intrusive guests.

Or should such awful chance befall, more dread  
And worse than worst of that which coward  
fear

Had forecast of, on some steep snow-side caught,

Midway to perch of safety while they haste,  
A sudden crack as of a pistol fired  
Cleaves the still air with warning ominous,  
That chills the blood within their startled heart.  
And while they pause a breath in vague sur-  
mise,

Their foothold strangely sinks a little space,  
Then swiftly slips, then slides amain, and then,  
Dragged downward with an awful, mighty rush,  
Fast and still faster with a torrent's speed,  
They pour along the steep no more as men,  
But things, mere driftwood in a freshet flood,  
Or tossing wreckage in a tempest surf,  
Blinded and stifled with an icy dust,  
Stunned by the thunderous roar, whirled now  
aloft,

And now engulfed beneath the foamy snow,  
In the living avalanche devoured quick,  
They slide, ah luckless coasters! headlong  
down

Towards some high brink, whence the abyss  
yawns sheer.

No breath for words! no time for thought! no  
place

For eager muscle! guides, companions, all  
O'ermastered in the unconquerable drift,  
In Nature's grasp held powerless, atoms  
Of her insensate frame, they fare as leaves  
In the dark rush of wild November gales,  
Or desert sands in the hot simooms' fell play;  
One gasp for breath, one strangled bitter cry,  
And the wild snow closes smothering in,  
And moulds their forms with icy lines about,  
And crushes life out, and entombs them there,—  
Nobler than kings Egyptian in their pyra-  
mids,  
Embalmed in the mountain mausoleum,  
And part of all its grand unconsciousness  
Forever.

Its still dream resumes the mount,

The sun his brightness keeps, for unto them  
The living men are naught, and naught the  
    dead,  
No more than snows that slide, or stones that  
    roll.

But voiding this, the extreme catastrophe,  
Our mountaineers make good their dangerous  
    way ;  
Though sore of foot, and with the snow-glare  
    dazed,  
Their foreheads fretted with the prickly sweat,  
They lag upon the path, and loiter slow.  
Now joy departs, and grim endurance comes,  
Unflinching Spartan trained to take the worst.  
Oft crave they halt, and oft their mutinous eyes  
Accuse the unstooping summit, still so high.  
Give wings, the Andean condor's vasty stroke !  
Or thews, the nimble chamois' legs of steel !  
To clear exultantly the arduous space,

That mocks them laggards, and derides their  
march.

In vain ! no Jove-sent eagle stoops his flight,  
As once for love to fair-limbed Ganymede,  
From circles empyrean to their aid ;  
From far Arabia no genii haste  
To waft them through divided airs on high.  
Their staggering muscles still must strain,  
Of their own blood must courage spring ;  
And soon, for lo, the greatest horror last !  
Danger undreamed of, monstrous, measure-  
less !

The final *Arête*, the toothed and shaggy rib  
Of that sky-piercing spire, that from the base  
So delicate and dainty smooth appeared,  
Uprears its ragged length, — the only path.  
Scarce Strasburg's tower more perilous to  
climb !

A bent, keen-pointed scimitar of crag  
Set upright on its hilt, with scant an edge



More broad than Moslem's bridge to Paradise,  
And deeply gashed in elemental wars,  
It cuts the clouds, and cleaves compacted storms.  
Above our climbers' heads so dizzily  
It reaches on, and on, beyond weak sight,  
Flouting poor skill, and cooling braggart  
tongues.

Who shall attempt that fanged and serrate rim?  
Who wrestle death on that perfidious wedge,  
Sleet-mailed and bitten by the vicious winds?  
Who scale that footless perch, a crazy stair  
For suicides and angered souls  
Of life a-weary? Clear half a thousand feet  
Of panic peril, either frenzied flank,  
A pitiless, nerve-shaking precipice,  
Shoots down to lancet-pointed rocks, a bed  
Of heartless cheer to him who falls. Well now  
May weaklings quail, for boldest mountaineers  
Of earlier centuries turned their backs

On this grim devil's ladder, whence one slip  
Were quick perdition, and the last ; but so  
They left to better-metaleed Englishmen  
The shining hour of those who dare and win.

Yet now the stalwart shoulders of a guide  
Will bear the timid o'er it, if one choose  
To save his courage for brave hours of talk.  
But few will flinch where hardier souls lead on.  
Stolid with old resolve our comradeship,  
Their faces set as flint and hearts as hard,  
All wordless grasp that thin hand - breadth of  
stone,  
That sleeted edge, that sun-groined icicle,  
To dangle there 'twixt cliff and sky, and climb,  
Worse than the pendant Icelanders, who grope  
Along the wave-washed sea-craggs to despoil  
The eider's downy nest, despising death  
If so his brood lie warm.

Now hand and foot,

Your best of cunning lend ! each muscle now  
Be tense as steel, flexible as withe !  
Quick-eyed, cool-nerved, stout-hearted all,  
Cleave to those rock-teeth with the clutch of  
fate !

Make sure your foothold, grappled to each step !  
Let no confusing glances stray to sound  
The windy gulfs of those brain-whirling voids !  
Be shrewd to shun each rocking stone, each  
wreath

Of frozen snow out-drifted o'er the abyss !  
Grow like an ivy to a crumbling tower,  
And, creeping push your wary way above,  
And still above, and yet again above !  
No mirth nor word enlivens now the task,  
No vagrant eye, no playful sportiveness  
Nor idle thought relieves the grinding toil.  
Breathless and voiceless drag they toilsome on ;  
Point after point they take, expecting each  
To be the last, and still in each deceived.

An hour, a tedious, tardy-footed hour  
Of dogged clamber, then the slender tip,  
Goal of their search, desired long with pain,  
Draws nearer, nearer to delighted sight,  
The haughty crest bates its unbending pride ;  
Supreme 'mid heaven an isle of lonely stone,  
One stable speck 'mid shoreless seas of air,  
It waits their conquering steps ; then tranquil  
still

As marble Juno in her seated calm,  
The Monte Rosa in her stateliness  
Receives them bustling where they proudly  
come,

And yields them transient lodgment where for  
aye

She dwells 'neath pure resplendent snows, her  
crown ;

Nor lends her heed to their exhausted cheer  
Which dies still-born in that high solitude,  
And echoless void of sky. But they glad

As far-spent swimmers on a longed-for beach,  
Not waiting, throw themselves along, and laugh  
A silent laugh, sweeping a free glance round  
The ringed horizon of the circle-world,  
Where dimmed sight fails in purple depths of  
space.

## II.

### THE SUMMIT.

AND what a vision greets their weary gaze !  
What realms of wonder, chaos of wild dreams  
Out-chaosed, kingdoms and seas of tumult !  
A granite continent asunder torn,  
And plowed as though fierce earthquakes oft  
    had driven  
Their shares beneath its rocky ribs, and turned  
Their crossing furrows here ; or as one day  
The welded globe itself o'er-strained had burst  
With swift explosion of all elements  
Revolted 'gainst their holdings, and discharged  
Its ragged fragments on offending plains.  
Alp upon Alp, mount upon mountain piled !  
Ridges sublime towered with sublimer peaks !



Valaisian, Oberland, and Dauphiné,  
Graian, and Cottian, and Maritime !  
Range behind range banked to the bended skies,  
And proudly burnished by the full-orbed sun !  
Huge forms in armies, fresh as had they risen  
An hour ago, and dressed their glittering ranks ;  
Like hosts of fair-skinned Northmen on foray,  
Encamped afield in Gothic turbulence,  
Scarce chief obeying, loyal to small law,  
And white their mighty tents, as pitched but  
yesterday.

All living Vikings seem, about to move  
And clash their armor, while they ask who  
comes

Intruding on their guarded bivouac.

The nearest thus :

The further masses merged  
Through wild disorders to far-stretching lines,  
That fortified cities feign, the nameless burgs  
Of superhuman folk, the precipice

Their frowning rampart, cloud-girt peaks their  
towers,

Impassable ravines their moats of dread,  
Bastions unstormed save of the jealous heavens.  
Their parapets a wondrous sky-line draw,  
With pyramids, rude Memnons, monoliths  
Adorned as had dead Egypt lent her spoil,  
Or greater than Egyptian built him new,  
And vaster, marked with older hieroglyphs  
Than Luxor boasts, or buried Nineveh;  
Scriptures of thrust and strain, of fracture, fire,  
And frost, by those perpetual scribes, who  
scrawled

These no man's records of a no man's day.  
Here as the distance lengthens, spire and crag  
Draw in perspective to vast colonnades,  
To which St. Peter's are as river reeds  
To California's pines, fading in haze  
Beyond, where faint as truth when new the last,  
Their bases lost in grosser atmospheres,  
Hang strangely pendant to the arch of heaven.

How vast the magic-built spectacle !  
Unearthly architectures, frost-temples,  
And winter palaces of nature ! Sure  
Some Goth Aladdin must have set the slaves  
Of lamp and ring in their uncanny tribes,  
At bitter labors here to pile these towers  
In numbers so innumerable !  
First show the great Valaisians, told before ;  
Then dreamily beyond the ribbon Rhone  
The tall Bernesers of the Oberland,  
Pillars of cloud by day, at dusk of fire.  
Their chief, if chief may be 'mid such great peers,  
Grave Finster-Aarhorn's storm-girt pinnacle,  
Whose tower of silence mocks the wrecking  
    years ;  
Then vestal Jungfrau, Amazon of maids,  
As for long-hindered nuptials still attired,  
Whose safe charms ten thousand rosy sunsets  
Flush with warm hues of youth, renewed in vain ;  
Next, her severe confessor, white-friar Mönch,

Eldest Carthusian, ere Carthusians were,  
Prevents fair Jungfrau from the sculptured  
strength

Of comely Eiger, knightly in his grace ;  
There Blumlis-Alp laments her blighted flowers,  
Gay asters, gentian blue, pale edelweiss,  
Whose nameless sweetness made that high air  
glad,

Till, balked of lady's love, a wizard foul  
Her green fields buried 'neath charmed sheets  
of snow ;

There cloud-capped Wetterhorn's cathedral pile,  
Source of perennial streams ; its minster towers  
Fret the bright sky with various tracery.

Leave these, and front another heaven, and lo !  
Another pageant and a rival pomp :  
For distant Grivola looms silvery soft  
Against the south, where slant and sleep,  
In wondrous peacefulness unvisited,

The wide white meadows of Grand Paradis  
Enrined in black-mailed arms of scowling crag ;  
The wind-tormented crest of Les Ecrins  
Smoking in stony surge mid smoking clouds,  
And Monte Viso islanded in mist,  
Sustained by heart of rock against Time's en-  
mity ;

While eastward Piz Bernina's wimpled hood  
Upon the last horizon, — or is 't a cloud  
Far-glistening o'er the frosty Engadine ?  
And west, Mt. Blanc serene, whose perfect dome  
Shames silver cupolas of all the Czars  
To beggary, uprolls his lordly head  
From out the speary thick of his *Aiguilles*,  
And looks unchallenged monarch, o'er his peers,  
To stately Rosa, — king to his crowned queen.

Below, so far that even the pirate hawk,  
Swooping for prey above the living fields,  
Would never spy what in the hollow hides,

Pinched gorges knit their unrelenting brows,  
And fertile valleys, rich with corn and vine,  
Bend their sweet stream-like curves as they  
were grooved

By pushing glaciers of the chillier prime,  
That with their icy horns gored through the  
rock,

And scourged the goodly meadows in their wrath,  
Slaying whole tribes of feather, fur, and fin.  
Here winds the deep, rock-bastioned Wispach  
vale,

Perpetual acre of immortal death,  
And playground of all perils, where disport  
The stealthy village-smothering avalanche,  
The frightful land-slip, when the half-mount  
slides

From its high vantage ruining to the plain;  
The earthquake's shuddering mischief from deep  
ground,

The bursting glacier's deluge unrestrained



Of giant ice-blocks swimming on swift floods,  
In awful inundation charging down  
Upon the helpless valley laid asleep,  
And sweeping off the herds, the crops, the soil,  
Dear lowly homes and families of men.

There the Anzasca Cañon, — fissure choked  
'Twixt throttling cliffs, that ban health-giving  
suns

Save at the top of noon, and foul disease  
Engender 'mid its large sublimities.  
There happier Alagna's bowery gorge,  
Idyl of rippling foliage and gray stone,  
Where frothy cascades cool from springs of snow  
Fling out the drenching spray to weeping boughs  
That droop their pendulous leafage heavily;  
The glossy chestnut blooms, the odorous birch  
And sweetly fruitful fig with laurels blend  
Immingling on the war-worn cheeks and brows  
Of mammoth boulders, thick-strewn everywhere,  
A storm of rocky fragments thundered down

From Rosa's awful summit in the clouds,  
And left as harmless ruins moss-grown here.  
There Gressonay her broader vale expands  
In gentle swales mown bare as fresh-reaped  
fields

By the keen glacier-draught that reaps unceasingly ;

While lower slopes yield to Italian suns  
Rich Southern fruits ungrudgingly bestowed  
On the Teutonic strangers lingering there  
Mayhap from ancient forays long forgot.  
Fleet-footed brooklets, nurslings of the hills,  
Run gayly down each valley, full of haste,  
Gurgling to night and day their wordless song ;  
And other vales beside unfurl their folds,  
D'Ayas, Tournache, Peline, and nameless more,  
That fan-like ray towards every vagrant wind,  
Towards Greek Marseilles and Lyons' silken  
mart ;

Geneva, dear to Calvin and Voltaire,

Of creed and cavil the unaureoled saints ;  
Towards Nurnberg old, and Munich new by art ;  
The sea-queen Venice, Turin, lair of kings ;  
And that low Mediterranean wave,  
Where boy Columbus oared his baby skiff,  
Upon its tamer billows nursing heart  
To dare the wild Atlantic's unsailed surge,  
And seeking old worlds hap to find a new ;  
Towards Como's castled shores, Maggiore's isles,  
Where doves coo soft mid pure camelias' bloom,  
And Milan, whose still white cathedral walls  
Resent the whiter snow-lifts of these hills.

### III.

#### WITH NATURE.

BUT what a sight for men of burgs and glebes !  
Such mighty circumstance, imperial pomp  
Out-braving all they boast of rich and great !  
Intolerable commonplace disdained,  
And costliest majesties made friendly !  
The high brought low, the low sunk to the  
abyss !

The haughty mountains leveled with the eye !  
The earth-despising clouds beneath one's feet  
Confounded with the fields they still contemn !  
The solid dome of firmament, that seemed  
To roof this crest, dissolves to breathing air,  
And breathing ether late one's native air  
Seen deep below shows like a lucid sea

Spread in blue bays and gulfs of atmosphere,  
Where wave the trees as trailing water-weeds  
Wherein men rove as fish in denser seas,  
And seek their food, and find it in their kind,  
And find life dear, and full of changeful charm,  
And loathe to leave it, loving all its ways.  
A universe reversed ! heavens new, new earth !  
Bosomed in peacefulness and sunny sleep.  
Mid-winter here, with tropic summer yon !  
A long, long climb of ever-climbing line !  
A fairy world of snow-peaks pale with height,  
And glacier-jeweled, draped with fog ;  
Unsmiling pines that sentinel the crags,  
And ambuscade the gorges, whose gnarled arms  
Catch out at every vagabond of cloud  
Found loitering in their camps ; hamlets faint  
Between long tongues of glacier, perched so high  
It seems their villagers must live in heaven ;  
So steeply slant, their farms one day must slide  
With crop and chalet to the crouching vales ;

And rarely lodged on some out-thrusting ledge  
The pious chapel set, trace of man's pain ;  
The swooning lowlands as a garden rolled ;  
The sheeted lakes, and soundless waterfalls,  
And litter of gray shingle everywhere !

One broods o'er all in silence nigh to death,  
Scarce breathing lest the magic spectacle  
Like sleep-spun dreams dissolving fade and pass,  
And leave the old horizon long outworn,  
Wherein his life has wasted heretofore.  
The formless air in twinkling ripples stirred  
Its shimmering ether pours around the whole,  
Gold, amber, azure, amaranth, and pearl,  
All colors blended in its lucent films,  
That smooth the rough, and make the savage  
    fair,  
Weaving the mazy interrupted lines  
Of thwarted range, and rudely-cloven ravine  
In one vast complex of grand harmonies,



Where every chaos melts to ordered grace.  
Not great Beethoven riding on the blasts  
Of his melodious passion at its height  
More graciously doth blend his storm of  
sound, —

Its swelling angers, its heart-piercing pains,  
Its outbursts of deep joy, that die away  
To breathless peace wherein the soul finds  
God, —

In symphonies imperishable as man,  
Than greater Nature sways this rocky storm,  
This hideous turbulency, and barren wreck  
Of shattered continent to harmonies  
Ethereal, majestic, wild, serene,  
One strain untroubled of harsh discords born.  
Drifts o'er the whole a spell of utter sleep,  
A silence deep as that of midnight skies,  
So undisturbed that all a picture seems,  
And we the painted men impassively  
As figures on the unrolled canvas set.

Far spins that truant ball our whilom earth !  
A little length, such as a man might pace  
Within an idle hour upon the plain,  
Hath raised us up to some celestial realm,  
Whence we look strangely down upon this globe  
As on an exile planet swinging clear  
Its rounded ball in airy space beneath ;  
Some nearer moon through telescope descried,  
A stranger orb, and foreign to our feet :  
Though vaguely deem we still that once we  
    knew  
Its scenes, and lived its troubled citizens,  
In days long gone, and wearily forgot.

But what is this lighter than infant's breath,  
No mist, nor voice, nor viewless herald's touch,  
Yet sure some Presence rare, impalpable,  
Through void skies leaning towards the skyey  
    peak,  
Which streams, a spectral form diaphonous,

Above the high-piled ranges near and far,  
The sunless deep defiles, and farthest stretch  
Of copious distance, to the cloudy verge  
Of bounded space? More faint than zephyr's  
breath

It lays soft spells upon us and o'ercomes  
Our thought:

Is it some Genius of the hill?  
The Spirit of the peak, that ne'er descends  
To disenchanted leas, but here at home  
A dainty Ariel and delicate  
Sways glimmering, wavering, whispering every-  
where?

Phantom most strange, elusive, general!  
Divine World-Spirit! universal Power!  
Soul of things visible in deep response  
To what seems soul in us, — our greater self —  
Out-breathing from vast Nature in her wilds!  
The Pan so loved and tenderly adored

When men were artless children ! Faintly falls  
Its breeze-born voice abroad unsyllabled,  
Scarce heard above the heart-beats, and yet  
seems

Burdened with utterance of mysteries  
That crowd around our being from its birth.  
And each ear listens reverently subdued ;  
Savage or saint, savant or dreamless man  
Of shrewd affairs, or he whom life has drained  
Of all sweet fearfulness, alike lends heed.  
A messenger and message comes unsought,  
A phantom touch plays lightly o'er his sense,  
A brush of ghostly wings invisible  
Makes rustle near his heart ; the mountain god  
Approaches his high seat ; and deeply moved  
With ancient Hebrew of a rural faith  
He looks up to the hills whence comes his Help ;  
Or with wild Aryan warriors, kindred old,  
Sees in the peerless white Himalaya  
The Brama's shining home with His strong  
gods ;

Or half believes, even late as yesterday,  
With oft-defeated guides that Spirits strong  
Hold safe the keep of frowning Matterhorn,  
While yet that rock beat all vain climbers back.  
And still a God! a God! rapt feeling cries;  
His face makes beauty in that formless air,  
His hand weaves splendors of that flimsy mist,  
He builds a magic into crag and glen,  
And with His living presence cunningly  
Blends scene and seer to one accordant joy.  
So trembling through the landscape like a sun  
That breaks in drizzly dawn on ice-mailed trees  
And glances fitfully down prised boughs,  
A thousand suns where yet no light shines clear,  
This glimmering presence faint and fugitive  
Breaks coyly from the prospect everywhere,  
And sparkling like frail dew-drops deftly hides,  
As were one glint enough, in mystery.

Of old, beholders close to nature held  
Found mighty gods and glorious enough

In these pale visions of an unknown world:  
Dyaus, old Kronos, Zeus the son of Time,  
Demeter-earth, bright Helios, and Jove  
The cloud-compeller, Pallas wise, strong Mars,  
Dew-bearing Dawn on mead-besprinkled steeds,  
A god for every cloud, and tree, and stream,  
Till glamour made the world a home of ghosts  
And plain meek earth, creature of airs and soils,  
Robbed of her daily powers and homely use  
Became a baleful sacredness and vain,  
While men went groping for the rainbow's gold,  
Or begging life where but the lifeless stood,  
And seeking gods where subtlest elements  
Their mightier service proffered unperceived.

Would gods were present! How would doubt-  
ing men

Give them high greeting and dear reverence due!  
But none comes nearer, none breaks through,  
Nor rends the unlifted veil; no clear wise word



Drifts softly forth from out the insensate noise ;  
A goodly world unhaunted lies serene  
In its sufficing loveliness ; no more !

The vagrant voice is but an errant wind,  
A sea-shell's murmurous nothing oft rehearsed.  
Such helpless voice divine Prometheus heard,  
And deemed it ample in his heat of rage,  
When chained on Caucasus, as fire to flint,  
Groaning he lay, and praying for some god  
To rescue him unhappy, ate his great heart out,  
The while he dreamed Zeus' vulture battened  
on it.

Now is his Hercules become a name  
For solar myth, and his tormentor Zeus,  
With all his brilliant compeers, left for dead,  
And dead the fires that on their altars blazed ;  
No longer sit their councils on the hills,  
Nor flash their forms before the impassive sun,  
Nor stoop they now to men in battle's stress,  
Nor from the solemn cave breathe oracles.

But pushed by ruthless Science in her quest  
From secret haunts whereof their hearts were  
glad,

They cease from gorge or peak to be discerned,  
Retired indignant to the farthest star,  
Where man may never hail them till he die.  
So vainly strain man's eager eyes, his ears  
As vainly hearken; the wavering mists  
Close round veiled Isis hidden as of old,  
Nor open through to Deity whom thus  
By searching none finds out; still vainly beat,  
As butterflies their fickle-spotted wings,  
Our rainbow hopes against the mail of secrets;  
The Mysteries keep their visors closed  
On peak and plain, nor write their legend out  
On rock or temple anywhere; and still  
They challenge each new-comer, what reply  
His life or lips may frame respecting them,  
While they restrain their tongues from telling,  
yea,

Or nay, concerning human destiny ;  
And like the dead keep silence unperturbed.

And yet the charm remains ; the wizard spell  
Weaves sweet delusions round the willing sense,  
As round the swaying cobra with his reeds  
The wily Indian weaves a thrall of sounds.  
The disillusioned mountains keep their state ;  
Eyes dew with tears beholding, raptures thrill  
To pain ; soft silence brushes babbling tongues ;  
The beautiful, bewildering immensity  
O'erpowers our souls with longing vague, and  
sweet.

We cease from thought, and shade our mortal  
brows,

Our eyes are not attempered to such light,  
Our hearts not strung to such large harmonies.  
The two-fold glory of the earth and sky  
Far-stretching to their one horizon line  
Subdues us utterly ; we seem unfleshed ;

Like homeless frigate-birds that freely live  
On ever-outstretched wing untiringly,  
The swift imagination spreads her plumes  
For one immortal flight o'er all eye sees,  
And all that lies unseen beyond, to touch  
The rim and verge of last infinity;  
In vain ! her pinions droop while yet  
She skims the threshold ; astronomic spaces  
Are too wide ; and then all space and endless  
time

Come crowding on to ask inclusion due  
Within the airy voyage ere 't is done ;  
Mid-heaven fails its strength, falters its quest  
Disquieted, dismayed, exhausted thought  
Can only gasp, whence came all this, and why,  
And whither goes, and what shall be its end,  
And ours who ask ? And get no answer clear,  
Not from the earth out-rolled, nor ocean gray,  
Nor from the spacious heaven o'er-domed, nor  
from

The ambitious mind with its increasing powers :  
But baffled still one lingers as in trance  
Full of surmises indolently vague,  
Then fearless launches out on vacancy,  
In search of some strong Maker undisclosed,  
Whom no thought measures, but whose hope  
                  transports,

As noble music when at piercing heights  
It beats the troubled air to ecstasy,  
And lifts the spirit speechless into bliss.  
Seems all a sight from Mount Delectable,  
Gateway, and garden of lost Paradise,  
A heavenly land where no man knows of pain.

So Nature ! with thy strong enchantments, thou  
Dost work thy will on us thy children fond,  
Till falling on thy breast enraptured, prone,  
We ache to know thy heart, and heart of hearts,  
And swooning in thy beauty crave thy grace.  
But unconcerned thou dost elude us still,

And keep us at a distance half estranged,  
And though we are thy children, feel thy pulse,  
And genial throb of being in each vein,  
Yet never close we with thee perfectly,  
Chilled in our passion, in our love restrained  
By thy composed and sweet indifference ;  
Though still like doting children must we love,  
And bless thee our enchanter, till we die.

So lightly dost thou hold us, and so cool  
Thy custom, and demeanor, Nature ! that  
No more than for dumb beast, or growing flower,  
Thou dost concern thyself for us, or care !  
Yet to ourselves we seem thy master work,  
Thy crown, and jewels in thy crown, so high,  
That o'er thyself in swelling syllables  
We proudly vaunt, and boasting make loud  
claim  
To greatness greater than thine own,  
To higher lineage, diviner end,



And destiny excelling thine, as sun the stars ;  
But thou in thy serene complacency  
Dost heed our claim no whit, dost treat us still  
As wayside accidents, as mists of morn,  
And like a mist dissolvest us to nothing.

So small are we indeed and vain ! to whom  
These trifling ranges of repeated ridge,  
These trivial knolls seem mighty, lying here  
A mower's swath, or weathered windrow raked  
Upon the uncumbered rondure of large earth,  
Or rank of haycocks waiting for the wain  
On the good farmer's closely-shaven mead.  
The shortness of our stature measuring all.  
Is guilty of their mightiness to us,  
As his slight body makes his bushel-heap  
To the atom-ant an ample hill, whereon  
His grand affairs transacted ripen apace ;  
But easily our girdled globe doth roll

Its circle full, and smooth, though roughened  
thus

By these huge jutting promontories  
Within its orb, as rolls an orange true  
Upon its wrinkled rind ; our smallness sole  
Makes them so great. Insects of space are we,  
By our own globe and habitation dwarfed  
To crickets on its rugous continents,  
That chirp their shining summer hour, and  
cease ;

While earth itself a petty star, and mean  
With Sirius, or far Aldebaran,  
Compared, or any nightly orb, swings on  
Its annual round scarce noticed mid the spheres.  
Insects of bounded space, and straitened time !  
To whom these hills eternal seem, so old  
Their recent day, so fixed their crags ! while  
they

With ceaseless waste consume their rocky  
strength,

And feel their vast antiquity to be  
But as a breathless second on the score  
Of that eternity, whose ages blind  
Fleet as the clock-ticks sound their passing by.  
While we as music of a player's horn  
Blare out upon the silence and are done.

But small or large, what matter ! what we are,  
we are.

Naught cares the well-housed tortoise in his  
shell

That he is yet nor hare nor swallow fleet.  
Still bound our nerves with exultations, hopes ;  
Still breathe we this high air with rapture, still  
See earth dilated to a palace large,  
Roofed with blue bravery of the cloud-sailed  
sky,

Lit by the unnumbered lustres of the sun,  
Swept by the wandering custom of all winds,  
Home of dark grandeurs, and fair loveliness ;

Our fathers' home and to our children dear,  
Scene of the million happy human lives,  
That crowd its continents, and sail its seas.  
O Earth ! too little is thy fullness bruited forth,  
Too much absorbed in men man lives untouched  
By thy unceasing movement, endless calm,  
And loses oft his soul in drudgeries  
That bring no joy nor lead to ampler life.  
And still thou liest smilingly content  
Unsmitten by contradiction and unvexed,  
Thy hills uplifted like a fairy's boon,  
And with no words dost call us, offering  
Not grain alone but gladness in thy face,  
With good and fair and whatso'er gives power.  
Rejected, feared, or scorned, neglected still  
With quiet patience as of sleeping child  
Thou leavest all for all, and him that takes  
Thy meaning thou dost fill with gracious gifts,  
And such rare transport, that the vanished gods  
Seem re-disclosed to him, and dædal earth

Enough without a better heaven ; for him  
 Comes each new day a fairy prince to kiss  
 His lips, and waken him to larger life,  
 Bring him the royal sun, the pensive moon,  
 The deep, uncounted stars, the rolling change  
 Of seasons old as sea sweet wooing airs,  
 Or storms of overwhelming majesty,  
 The magic mystery of being, all  
 To draw him out of stony moods of gloom,  
 To fill his days with hours of beaten gold,  
 To touch his nature with the strength of hills,  
 To cool his brow with freshness of blithe morns,  
 To give his mind the large horizon's span,  
 And to his heart the peace of sunny wolds.  
 Such dreams salute us on this air-girt top,  
 And summit of the world ; our souls escape  
 To novel liberties, franchises strange ;  
 We rend the withes of custom, rise and fall  
 Infuriate on the coarse Philistine hordes  
 Of common thought, stale reason, and mean use,

Rebuke our wrinkled creeds, conceits, weak  
fears,

And all that hinders from unleashed desire ;  
Ourselves we free as birds, — the libertines  
Of heaven's azure fields : no hurrying cloud,  
Nor yon unmastered eagle sailing lone,  
Whose seldom-striking pinions fan the winds  
Of farthest continents, while he not recks  
What land swims small beneath him, soars  
more free.

Us now, repentant skeptics, takes the god ;  
Our blood runs wild like those who, drunk with  
wine,

Danced madly in the ancient mysteries,  
And whirled in Mænad rout, and cried aloud  
Evoe, Bacche ! Ah, Evoe, hail !

And felt the god suffusing every sense  
That with the orgy all of self expired.  
And we are drunk with Nature at her feast,  
We are ourselves the genii of the peaks ;



We call to Lyskamm, Breithorn, Matterhorn,  
To Weisshorn in the distance, Mischabel,  
And every shining summit far and near,  
To hail them as our brothers, living parts  
Of great organic nature one with us ;  
And with that chained Prometheus on his rock,  
We cry, O Ocean old, and ye gray mists,  
And swift-winged breezes, and much-laughing  
waves,

All-seeing sun, and earth our mother dear,  
Gods of the prime, in the white dawn of man,  
We keep to you this day a revelry,  
Ancestral, not Semitic, Aryan pure,  
And to us Aryans kin, as at your shrines  
We worship with the souls of cousins gone,  
Who, living once as now we live, still found  
In you their strength, their wonder, and their  
joy ;

Admit us to your mysteries ; make large  
Our hearts with benedictions new,

Give us to cherish all your mighty laws,  
To love your sights, your sounds, your secret  
powers,

And with you live unsaddened, unreprieved,  
Till we lie down beneath you undisturbed.

As some worn saint from penance drear re-  
leased,

And floating out of tortured flesh to God,

Beholds draw near the imperishable dawn

Whose peaceful hope receives the holy dead,

So drifting in our mountain ecstasy,

And bathed in dreamy atmospheres we see

Approaching through a vast of space, the peace

That folds the round world in its soft embrace

And bounds of being as an ether folds

The tethered planets in their heavenly rings.

#### IV.

##### THE DESCENT.

BUT though enraptured, men may not abide  
On Monte Rosa's slender point, nor build  
Their tabernacles amid its clouds,  
Plain-nurtured creatures, they the plain require.  
The genial noontide dies to ugly night,  
And night so near the stars is harsh with cold,  
While shameless hunger coming like a dun  
To splendid palace doors sues fretfully ;  
For whom grows naught on this heaven-pierc-  
ing spire.

One lingering here would find his frugal fare  
Leaner than forage of starved grasshoppers  
That cling to mullein seared by nipping frosts  
Of late September to brown barrenness.

So now prosaic guides discreetly wise,  
Upgathering all their gear command descent.  
And all the more that the low, lonely wind  
Lifts to a louder key its drony hum  
Spinning a thread of snow from each slim spire,  
That like a hairy comet streams abroad,  
Of coming tempest harbinger, and flag.  
Now urge foreboding guides unwonted speed;  
In haste run all, like fleeing Israel,  
To that unshorn *Arête*, again to swing  
Unhappy bodies there, in dismal case,  
And curse its raveled raggedness, with sighs  
That flesh were harder or tall rock more soft.  
Another lunacy, that grim descent,  
Unlike good Vergil's facile road to hell!  
The upward perils doubly perilous  
Recur; the uncertain feet grope blindly down,  
No eye their hold foreseeing; painfully  
The hands let go the unwonted grasp above.  
And while like seals on land they fumble on

With cumbrous care, like gliding seals at sea  
The rapid tempest skims the etherial wave,  
Borne on more winds than Æolus held, that fall  
Like birds of prey with furious beak and claw  
Upon the mangled ridge, their ancient quarry,  
Unconquered still through blustering centuries,  
Nor giving heed to those poor human mice,  
That creep in mortal danger down its face.  
And what a place for men in such a war  
Of elements unloosed ! an ice-glazed edge  
Of crag, whereon the sturdy mountain goat  
For all his climbing were afraid ! A gale  
Would pluck the ruffled falcon from his perch,  
Or sweep the windy crow down leagues of sky !  
Three miles of storm-swept space above the  
    round  
And general globe, with but this untrimmed  
    spar,  
This stony topmast of the good ship "Earth"  
To hang by. Even the night-wrapped sea-boy

Upon the switching yards when waves swim  
high,

And drench the humming cordage, is less far  
From gentle safety ; while scurrying fogs  
Thicker than banks of metaphysic cloud,  
And drearier, close darkly in, as night  
Itself were falling out of time ; flies swift  
The petaled snow, and crooked lightnings strike  
From cloud to cliff mid thunderous echoes  
roused.

Now life's sweet wine to bitter wormwood turns ;  
The beauteous Day deforms her shining face,  
And hides a withered crone beneath the skies ;  
All landmarks disappear, all sight cut off,  
The wide world narrows to an eagle's roost ;  
The men are left alone, they and the storm.  
Chilled, blinded, stiff, hands freezing, freezing  
feet,

They still hold on their formidable way,  
Wrapping that hateful twist of stone about,



As pendulous spider wraps his slender thread  
With all his legs, yet making tardiest way ;  
And now they swing from axe-head planted deep  
Above, now slip roped fast down dripping icicles,

Or scramble warily mid loosened stones,  
That tottering drop to soundless depths below.  
And oft the anxious guide's sharp cry rings out  
Above the roar of storm, "Take care ; don't  
slip ;

Take time," and oft he strains the slackened  
rope ;

But if some bungler trips, with anguish shrieks,  
"For Heaven's sake, care ! Hold fast, be sure !"  
While louder screeds the gale, and fans the  
*Arête*

With measureless wide wing unceasingly,  
Like the mysterious roc of wonder tale :  
Still on they grope fog-smothered, yet un-  
harmed,

Till youth's light heart quick rallied into play,  
Finds all half-jest, and laughs within the storm;  
When one raw tyro numbed by windy cold  
Turning an ugly corner backward slips,  
And stumbles toward a fatal plunge cloud-  
swathed,

Upon the Lyskamm side of naked precipice,  
Where any fall, like winged Mercury,  
Leads swift to Pluto and the sunless fields.  
But quick as viewless word, which that wild  
drudge

The lightning runs with, leaps the undaunted  
guide,

His life flung on the hazard instantly,  
To clutch the luckless stumbler as he reels;  
And bending all his lustihood to task,  
With one great lurch of his resistless arm  
Swings him across the knife-edge like a babe;  
And since no time to get his footing there  
Is left, he rather leaps than falls

Down the sharp rival slope, less precipice  
Though scarcely less, upon the northern face  
Where seamless ice and glassy smooth runs down  
To deadly steeps an instant's dash below.  
There flash they down a double meteor,  
Scarce seen, when gone, towards that awful  
brink,

Where waits the primal Nihilist, calm death.  
But now the cool-brained Swiss, shrewd moun-  
taineer,

Knit to his man as grasping hawk to fowl,  
Bites deep his axe-point in the frozen slide,  
Till hangs the trusty steel in its own groove.  
And checks their flight in mid destruction  
stayed,

One bold moment's work, no more! but moment  
Laced with all the threads of spinning Fates.

So holding on with enforced stubbornness,  
The party finds its way whole and unmarred,

To the large bosses now fresh-clad in snow,  
Whence the *Arête* springs forth its dizzy spire ;  
Here easy foothold offers rapid course,  
Yet mockingly, for where at morn the snow  
Night-cruised gave a marble floor as laid  
For conquering caliphs, now the soft flakes lie  
In fluffy lightness, hindering every stride  
As feathery scruples clog ambition's way.  
But since the worst seems past, and danger less,  
The weary men go carelessly, nor heed  
Repeated admonitions of the guides,  
But straggle wide and try to shorten space,  
Thinking the tedious miles remaining still  
But frigid drudgery unspiced with danger's zest ;  
And trudging on unroped they find the storm  
A blithe adventure rich in novelty.  
But prowling peril with a stealthy tread  
Haunts every Alpine path, and suddenly  
One comrade makes a short glissade, where  
shows

No harm, and like a wanton boy skims down  
A slope, but losing foothold as he slides,  
Turns from his course, and o'er an unseen brink  
Rolls headlong, disappearing like a ghost  
That noiseless flits along, without a word.  
Engulfed and swallowed clean within the jaws  
Of a wide-spread crevasse, whose steely lips,  
Fringed like a shark's with gleaming fangs of  
fear,  
Grin horrible, the glacier's ghastly smile,  
Portal and pit of an unshoveled grave.

Now what a thrilling outcry rends the air!  
What pallid terror sits on every cheek!  
What dark foreboding clouds each knitted brow!  
And chief the faithful guides, who fullest know  
How deep the peril, stand amazed with fear.  
All huddle round the fatal brink, and bend  
Into the twilight chasm, and call down  
And listen fearfully, to hear at last

One muffled groan steal up the rayless pit,  
Then utter stillness, as the dead are still.  
Now aching fear lends bungling hands and slow  
To frantic zeal; while tremblingly they join  
The ropes in one, and knot it fast about  
An eager guide, — too eager in his fear, —  
Who quickly then is lowered between the walls  
And icy jaws of that unfathomed crevasse.  
Down, far down into the chilly darkness  
He descends, peering this way and that  
In search of their lost comrade, finding naught,  
And groping still, when with a hasty run  
The ill-tied knot, weak in its fastening, slips,  
And parting midway drops the pendant Swiss  
Within the death-trap. Whither? Ah, whither?  
Who knows whither? They only know that  
two  
Are gone, and one perhaps is killed; and both  
Imperiled utterly need swift release,  
And half the priceless rope is in the chasm.



Those on the brink, with slackened cord in hand,  
A moment sit as dazed, stunned, paralyzed,  
Feeling a horror of great darkness fall,  
As on the sleeping song-birds falls the owl  
Devouring happy broods, melodious of joy.  
And that black tragedy, life sometimes is,  
Comes bearing down upon them, flying at peak  
The death-head's flag, with fierce disasters  
manned.

In such an hour the heart grows old as time,  
And dreamily seems one with sufferers  
Of every age and clime ; with martyrs, slaves,  
With hopeless prisoners, men wrecked at sea,  
On prairies lost, or bayed by ravening wolves,  
Or anyhow set on by fierce Calamity  
With his blood-thirsty hounds ; one bends be-  
neath

The undivided woes accumulate  
Of all his troubled race since time bore man,  
In his own form and single misery.

Time seems a dream of dreams, and man Time's  
fool, —

The flying football of its angry hours.

But moments now are precious, here's no hour  
To indulge in wasteful grief. The men below  
Crave speediest rescue ; minutes are as gold.

Swiftly new ropes are spliced, and coats are lent  
To give more length ; and soon a second Swiss  
Is on his downward way unterrified

By all foregone mishap, who finding late  
His comrade-guide unhurt, calls loudly up  
The joyful news ; the narrowing chasm had  
caught

His falling body in its wedgy jaws,  
A trifling pace below, whence his good axe,  
Plied skillfully, might work him full release ;  
A little toil untrammels him entire,  
And quick the ropes re-joining both resume  
Their cheerless search, and grope about the  
cavern,

Crowding their way along the closing walls,  
Two ghastly precipices of dripping ice,  
Till finally they light upon their man  
Lying motionless, insensible, lodged fast  
Upon a ragged ice-shelf boldly pushed  
Against the opposing wall, where drawing in  
The trenched crevasse constricts its gulfy throat  
To half its former breadth. There, still as dead,  
One arm hung listlessly from off the shelf,  
His dank hair dripping with the ice-dew, stark,  
His garments torn, and frozen to the ledge,  
Their comrade lies in such an evil plight  
As stuns his finders, finding him so low,  
And scarce of his salvation seems a hope.  
Here is small space to put forth half their  
force,  
So strait the cave, so close its mighty jaws,  
That like a coffin hug their victim in,  
And gives scant room to swing the trenchant  
axe

And cut their fellow loose ; but manfully,  
Like faithful Switzers, losing no dear time,  
They ply their utmost skill, their utmost  
strength,

And work as those who hold another's life  
In fee ; since still they feel a heart-beat faint,  
A flutter of spent life, thanks to the slope  
Of ice-wall, where, though steep, the hapless man  
Had rather slid than dropped to his cold perch.

Above, the rest sit gloomy on that evil brink,  
Holding the loosened rope, and full of boding  
fears,

Their friend, themselves, in such a desperate  
plight,

And life seems scarce a boon in such black hour.  
And anxiously they wait a sign to pull  
Aloft, while flit the dreary moments on,  
To find them waiting still in hope deferred.  
At last the signal comes, and drawing slow,

They raise — a guide exhausted, strained, dis-  
mayed,

And pale with strenuous effort still in vain,  
For still their friend is fast ensepulchred.

How chill fares sinking hope in each warm  
heart !

And haggard grows the waning day, the while  
Deaf Nature unrelenting makes no sign,  
But storms along as recklessly as were  
Our men but stones, and their sweet lives no  
more

Than frosted leaves; the riotous elements  
Prolong their revels; thunder, lightning, sleet,  
In wild Walpurgis' dance their demon-parts  
Sustain unweariedly; how far from men!  
How far from shelter, food, or friendliest fire!  
Nor any trodden way of helpful folk  
Is here; nor saving hands of help and care;  
Protection none, nor mercy; and all vain  
The cry for respite; law-obeying heavens

And ordered winds must keep their courses sure,  
Though half the sphere fell to their sightless  
rage.

In vain! men's late repentance, that as fools  
They left the peaceful fields, where all the land  
Lay safe before their feet, to tempt this rock,  
And try conclusions in this wilderness,  
Against the mateless forces of roused Earth.  
In vain the stifled outcry of their hearts,  
"Spare, Nature, spare! dear Mother, spare!  
Call off

These airy murderers whose lightest sport  
It is to slay us, Nature! even in our prime."  
But cold and storm hear nothing! Human  
hands

Must save, or death will sing his pæan on the  
slain.

Another Swiss descends in that long grave,  
And working like a madman recklessly  
Cleaves the last obstacle, then twines the rope



About the unconscious body, giving sign  
To raise all gently. So again above  
They draw their speechless comrade in sad case  
A woful mockery of that blithe mate  
Who passed this way at morn so buoyant, bold,  
Now by such savage handling left in pause  
Upon the dreadful threshold, which once crossed,  
Recrossed is nevermore; — him they salute  
As those about to die salute the dead.

What boots it now that heedless Nature shows  
Her utmost grandeurs with an artist's skill,  
If tented on the radiant highlands Death  
Keeps his black camp, himself a robber knight,  
That with his cruel troopers scours the land;  
Nor gives to harmless travelers any peace  
By day or night, though traveling carefully.  
But one he flings at from the shelving crags,  
Another clutches through a swathing fog,  
Or skulking in the glacier plucks a third

To dripping dungeons foul with dead men's  
bones ;

Or with swift, snowy minions whirling down  
Bears off whole comradeships of lusty men  
To cells of silence whence no ransom buys.

Yet oft the bandit fails, outwitted oft  
By wilier human cunning, or o'erborne  
By bolder deed ; so here he springs his trap  
And takes no prey, for that a spark of life  
Remains unquenched, a feeble pulse, a trace  
Of breathing, small enough, but still enough  
To keep life's sluggish current to its flow.

For now all hastily untiring hands  
Afford life's ministries, and kindly rough  
Recall faint tint of blood to those pleached lips,  
Bring back the fuller pulse, the stronger breath,  
Till saved their friend sits up, he speaks, he  
lives,

And that fell danger baffled slinks away.

But deadly perils still a howling pack  
Bark close around their heels, as once again  
They strike the downward way; the drifted  
snow,

The hidden track, the muffling fog, the cold,  
And landmarks all invisible; besides  
Their saved companion's strength but half re-  
gained

Asks careful journeying that hinders speed.  
They crawl where scarce the carrier-pigeon's  
wing

Could over-haste their course; and surly Day  
Strides onward toward his western caves; all  
things

They need; assistance, strength, good cheer, new  
life.

Will not some helper come? Will never snows  
Have end? Will never storm draw off, and  
clouds

Melt into native nothingness? Is there

No mercy stealing out of heaven to bring  
Them rescue ? Now that earthly help but fails,  
And wearied guides trudge on so heavily !  
Forgotten are all words of merriment  
As they press on, — unhappy, listless, slow,  
Fearful of some yet darker fate to fall.

But storms hold not forever ; and at last  
This tempest falters, parts its thinning mists,  
Calls in its winds, binds back the pelting sleet,  
Rolls off the gathered cohorts of thick cloud  
That linger low and long in leaden folds  
Upon gray Rosa's summits ; reappears  
The courtly company of kingly hills,  
So grand, so pure, so robed in innocence,  
So like a royal murderer's lily hands  
When in sweet morning dew washed stainless  
clean

After night's tragedy is done and hid.  
And now returns the wonder-working Sun,

Divine life-giver marvelous, and pours  
His slanting gold athwart the wintry wolds,  
And o'er the distant hill-sides soft and brown,  
Where lie kind homes, and happy men go on  
To peaceful evening tasks with painless thoughts;  
And on the Gorner glacier, far below,  
Are moving forms, small as the valiant wren,  
But moving hitherward, some kindlier souls  
Come out to bring the hard-pressed wanderers  
Their sorely-needed succor ere they die.  
Now leap all hearts, as if Apollo came  
And breathed his godhood's force upon their  
limbs,  
And wrought an ancient miracle within;  
That strong and light of foot they push their  
steps  
Down the huge mountain bosses, all alive;  
And even their much-hurt comrade, limping on,  
Seems filled with wondrous vigor, and restored,  
Like half-dead Grecian heroes whom the god

Snatched from the press of battle and made  
whole ;

Now many a safe glissade at coasting speed  
Makes fleet their progress down the hardening  
slopes,

And gravitation, like a guardian nurse  
Holding small hands, lets down their lengthened  
steps,

While blazes glorious sunset overhead,  
Smiting the mountains into waves of fire.

So ever flitting, the soft-footed Hours  
Bring home the doughty mountaineers unslain,  
Beneath the deepening twilight, weary, slow,  
But, since they foiled great peril, bold of mien ;  
Though gratefully as ne'er believed they stride  
The foot-worn threshold of the low-browed inn  
Upon high Riffel's forehead, whence at dawn  
They sped away so flush and stout of heart,  
As seems some dreamy untold ages since,



So deep a gulf has rare experience  
Thrust 'twixt linked morn and eve. Then rest-  
ing here

Within the cozy guest-room they recount  
Their dread adventure to deep-listening ears,  
Still heightening every danger now surpassed,  
And fain to tell the grandeurs of the way.  
But these will not rehearse themselves in words ;  
The visual dream transcending frail report  
Remains a treasure-trove, a fairy gold  
Hid in the loneliest caverns of shy thought,  
Not hoarded yet unshared ; for none but he  
Whose startled eyes have seen can guess the  
sight

That rises like a mirage, heavenly clear,  
Upon the inner vision, undefiled,  
Of phantom peaks dim with the silver light,  
Of blinding snow-fields roofed with sapphire  
skies,  
Of emerald pastures pierced by glaciers cold,

Of wrinkled crags sad with corroding years,  
With streams of misty amethyst between,  
Crowding the dream-horizon with such pomp  
And wondrous pageantry as dwarfs the real  
And living world to thinnest fantasy,  
In face of those more regal realms. Alas!  
For with all comes deep wistfulness and pain  
That such unwasted grandeurs still should stand  
To bless beholders with unrivaled joy,  
And we not there to see them all our days.

V.

PULVIS ET UMBRA.

So Monte Rosa stands, and so has stood  
More years than there are needles on the pine ;  
And so may further stand unspent more years  
Than there are crystals in her banks of snow ;  
But still the wolfish hours shall gnaw her crags,  
The tireless elements that carved her symmetry  
Tear at her spires, nor heed that driving rain,  
Sleet, cold, sand-bearing wind, and sunshine's  
kiss,

Or lightning's blow but spoil what once they  
sped.

The riving rock continually wastes,  
The mount shall sink to hill, the hill to mound,  
The oak shall grow where once the glacier  
groaned,


And where snow sparkled shall the snow-drop  
star,

Chamois shall yield to sheep, and all to time ;  
The tribes of beast and men lie down to sleep,  
A general sleep unquestioning, and earth  
As lifeless nod about the cooling sun  
As does the half-seen moon round parent earth ;  
For all things haste to changing not to end :  
One cycle dawns, but treading on its heel  
A stronger cycle thrusts it quickly forth,  
To be in turn left dying by a third ;  
Or rather is no cycle but one time,  
Whose unit is eternity, of which  
The minutes grow to hours, the hours to days,  
And these to months, which swell to rapid years,  
Or loitering centuries that run their tale,  
And tortoise race to such high numerals  
As e'en to think of drugs man's memory,  
Like poppy or mandragora ; a mote  
He seems in such deep reckonings, a breath,

A microscopic atom, scarcely more  
Than that discerned bacterium that rolls  
And finds an ocean in the film of dew  
Contained between the close-pressed lenses, held  
Beneath the powerful lens of some shrewd man  
Of science, searching long to find the start  
And genesis of being in the least.  
So goeth all things, nothing finds its end  
Save in a new beginning which grows old,  
And endlessly transforms itself to new.  
And this our mountain, in whose shadow we  
Have found our pleasure, yields her majesty  
To that great sweep of universal law  
By which she grew, which brings her to her  
death.

And who shall say what lies beyond save this:  
That some good future issuing from the mists,  
And no less gracious, though to us unknown,  
May follow with new wonders, splendor, strength,  
Such that we well might grieve most bitterly

Should we not be to see it in its prime ;  
But there we cannot follow, even on fancy's  
    wing,  
For now we stand upon the outmost rim  
Of matter vague, eternal, infinite,  
And have no chart across its trackless lea.



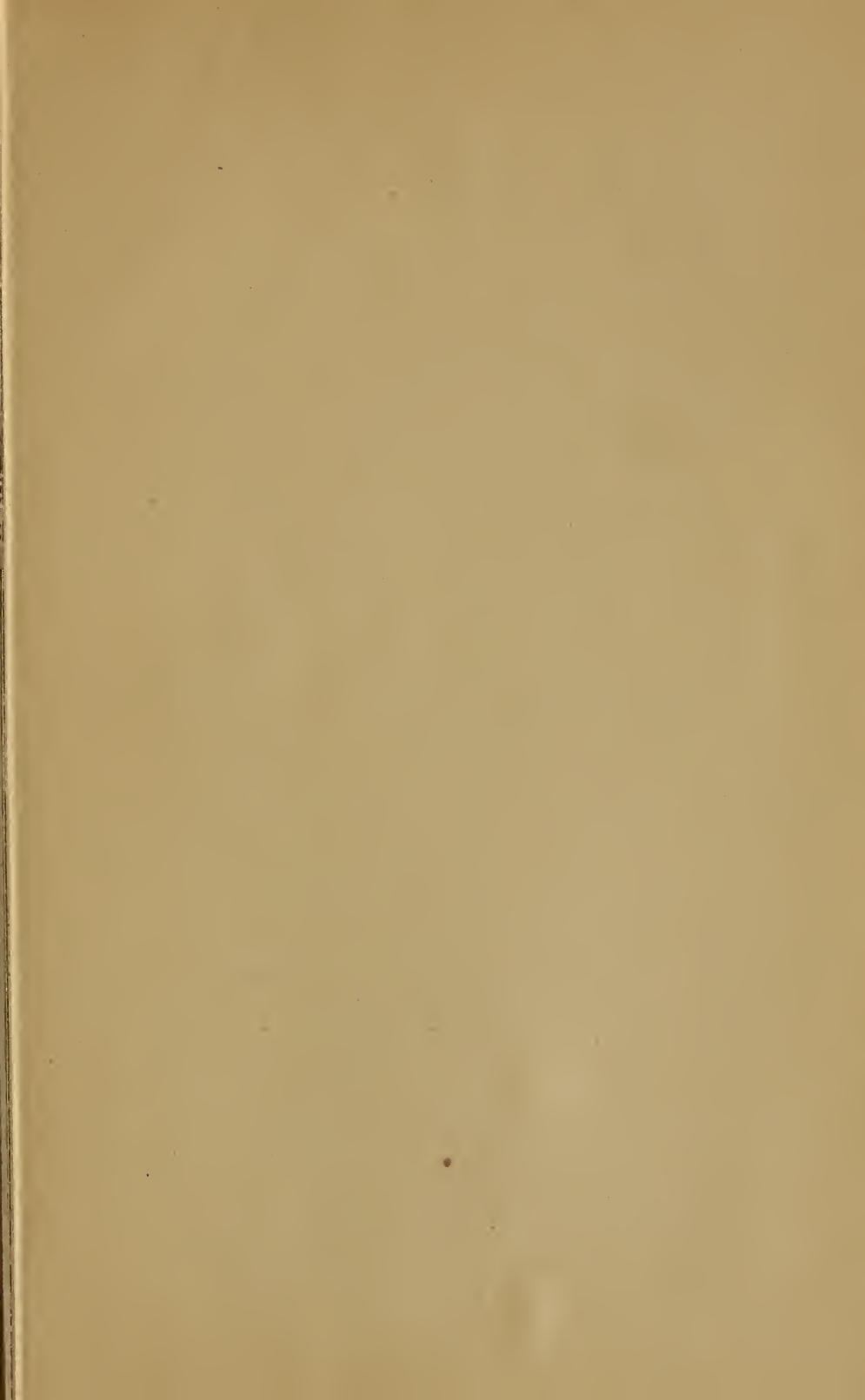






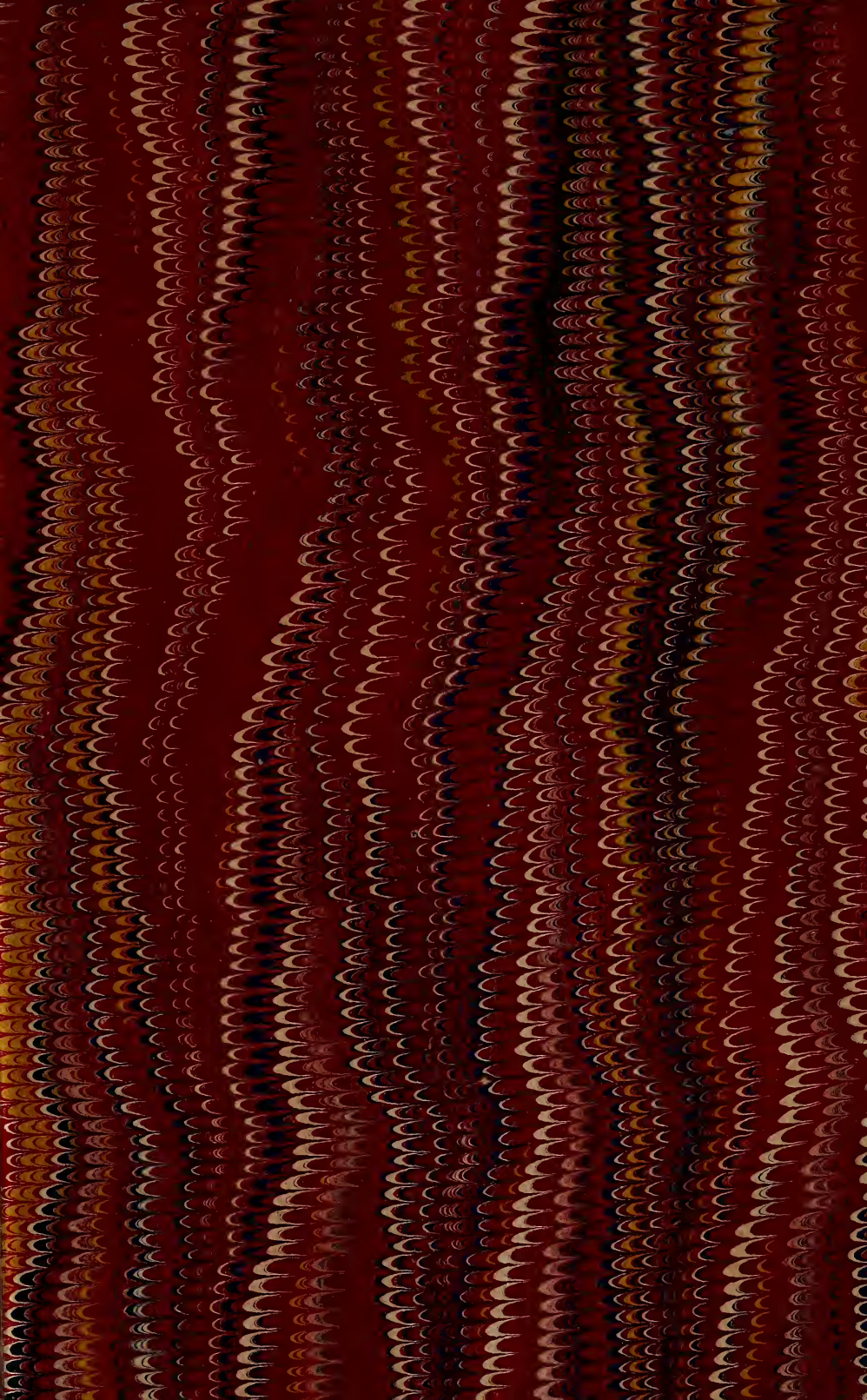












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